Gal 1009

A

PARAPHRASE AND COMMENT

UPON THE

Epiſtles *and* Goſpels,

Appointed to be Uſed in the

Church of *ENGLAND*

ON ALL

SUNDAYS and HOLY-DAYS Throughout the Year.

Deſigned to excite Devotion, and promote the Knowledge and Practice of Sincere Piety and Virtue.

VOL. IV.

Beginning with the Feaſt of St. ANDREW, *and Ending with Queen* ANNE's *Inauguration.*

By GEORGE STANHOPE, D. D.
Late Dean of *Canterbury.*

The SEVENTH EDITION.

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12

TO THE

QUEEN'S

MOST SACRED

MAJESTY.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

MADAM,

YOUR Majesty hath already condescended, most graciously to accept my poor Endeavours, upon the Service of our Established Church, for the Sundays throughout the Year.

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MADAM,

YOUR Majesty hath already condescended, most graciously to accept my poor Endeavours, upon the Service of our Established Church, for the Sundays throughout the Year.

The ſame Excellent Church, which Your Majeſty's Piety ſo conſpicuouſly governs, protects, adorns, and loves, hath wiſely appointed Devotions proper for the Chriſtian Feſtivals. And now, my Labours to render Theſe alſo uſeful and inſtructive, humbly preſume to aſk Your Royal Countenance and Favour. A pardonable Preſumption, I hope; In regard ſuch Devotions were intended to do Honour to thoſe Saints, whoſe Doctrines and Virtues are Your Majeſty's conſtant Rule and Pattern: Thoſe Saints, whoſe Memory is, as is alſo Your Majeſty's, worthy to be preſerved with Immortal Reſpect: And among whom You, Madam, (with Your late Royal Conſort) will ſhine

yet more gloriously; when translated from Your Earthly, to a Better, and more durable, Crown in Heaven.

In the mean time (and, for Your People's sake, may that Time be long!) Your Majesty continues a living Incitement, to the Holy Joys of those Other Solemnities; which celebrate the Signal Mercies of God, to this particular Church and Nation. For these Mercies are every Day growing upon us, by Your Majesty's most gentle and auspicious Government. May all Your Subjects pay their Thanks to God and Your Majesty for them, as the Offices for those Occasions direct: And may the *Father of Mercies*, and the *God of all Consolations*, so sanctify and support

port You, under the tender Senſe of an Affliction, the Weight of which all Good Men feel for You, and with You; that every freſh Tryal of Your Majeſty's Virtue may render the Influence of Your Example more ſucceſsful here; and the Degrees of Your Happineſs more exquiſite hereafter.

I am, with all poſſible Duty,

(May it pleaſe your Majeſty)

Your Majeſty's moſt Faithful,

moſt Obedient,

November 1. 1708. *and moſt Devoted,*

Subject and Servant,

GEORGE STANHOPE.

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A

PARAPHRASE and COMMENT

Upon all the

Epiſtles and Goſpels

Uſed throughout the Year.

VOL. IV.

St. ANDREW's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. ANDREW.

ST. *Andrew* was the Son of *Jonas* a Fiſherman of *Bethſaida*, and (by the Antients, *Epiphanius* excepted, believed to be the younger) Brother of St. *Peter*. Of his Education, his Diſcipleſhip to the Baptiſt, his firſt and ſecond Call to Chriſt, and the Effect which theſe had upon him, enough is ſaid on the Goſpel for *Sund.* v. after *Trinity*, and on That for this day. That Coming to our Lord, and the early Acquaintance with him, of which we read in the firſt of St. *John*'s Goſpel, gained him the Title of the *Firſt called*. And the bringing his Brother *Simon* the firſt Intelligence of, and conducting him to, the Meſſiah, is the reaſon of his being ſtyled πέτρος πρὸ πέτρας or *The Rock before the Rock*. John i. 44. John i. 35-40.

His Brother and He ſeem to have dwelt together in the ſame Houſe, where *Pe-* Mark i. 29.

ter's Wife's Mother lay ſick. Though we do not read of him, that he had the ſame Privilege of being admitted to the Privacies of our Lord, as his Brother, and *James*, and *John* had; yet ſome Paſſages there are, which may be thought to intimate a more than common Intereſt in our Lord's Favour. When five thouſand were to be fed by a Miracle, and our Lord had made an Experiment of *Philip*'s Faith; Upon his anſwering, how impracticable the refreſhing ſo many in that place was; Our Lord enquires into the Quantity of their Proviſion: Of which *Andrew* was the Perſon, who gave the Account; but withal, of the vaſt Diſproportion, between ſo little Food, and ſo many wanting to be fed.

Compare John vi. 5--9, *with* Mark vi. 37, 38.

Some Greeks, at our Lord's laſt Paſſover, deſirous to ſee *Jeſus*, but not preſuming to approach him, without an Introducer, apply to *Philip*; He communicates their Requeſt to *Andrew*, and Both theſe together prefer it to our Lord. It is alſo worth our notice, that this Apoſtle is named as the fourth, who attended his Maſter, in his Retirement to to the Mount of *Olives*, and were preſent at the Warnings he was pleaſed to give, of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of his own laſt Coming.

John xii. 20, 21, 22.

Mark xiii. 3.

After our Lord's Aſcenſion, the part of the World aſſigned to St. *Andrew*'s Care, was *Scythia*. He was not idle in his Paſſage thither; but preached in *Cappadocia*, *Galatia*, *Bithynia*, and by the Coaſt of the *Euxine* Sea, till he had penetrated into the Deſarts of that barbarous country. St. *Jerom* ſays, he preached at *Sebaſtople*, where the Rivers *Phaſis* and *Apſarus* run into the *Euxine* Sea. *Nazianzen* ſays the ſame of *Epirus*. He preached alſo in *Thrace*, *Macedonia*, and *Achaia*; correcting, as St.* *Chryſoſtom* expreſſes it, the Wiſe Men

Euſeb. Hiſt. lib. iii. c. 1.

Catal. Script.

Orat. in Arrian.

* Hom. in 12. Apoſt. T. 5. Orat. 168.

Men of *Greece*. At laſt in *Patræ*, a City of *Achaia*, *Ægeas* the Proconſul, enraged at his undauntedly perſiſting to publiſh the Doctrine of a crucified Saviour, condemned him to the Death which he ſo much extolled. This he ſuffered on a Croſs; not of the uſual Form, but like the Letter X, and ſince known commonly by the Name of a St. *Andrew*'s *Croſs*. To make his Death more painful and lingring, he was faſtened to it, not with Nails, but Cords. On which, after having hung two Days, all the while praiſing God for his Martyrdom, and exhorting the Spectators to the Chriſtian Faith, he is ſaid to have expired, the 30th Day of *November*. *Conſtantine* afterwards brought his Body to *Conſtantinople*, and interr'd it there, with great reſpect. In which City alſo, St. *Andrew* is reported, by one of the ſucceeding Patriarchs, to have planted a Chriſtian Church, and to have ordained the beloved *Stachys*, mentioned by St. *Paul*, the firſt Biſhop of it.

Hieron. Catalog. Script.

Niceph. C. P. *p.* 309.

Rom. xvi. 9.

The COLLECT.

ALmighty God, who didſt give ſuch Grace unto thy holy Apoſtle St. *Andrew*, that he readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, and followed him without delay: Grant unto us all, that We, being called by thy holy word, may forthwith give up ourſelves obediently to fulfil thy holy Commandments, through the ſame Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

S. Matth. iv. 19, 20. *St.* Mark i. 16, 17, 18.

The EPISTLE.

Rom. x. 9.

PARAPHRASE.

9. *IF thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.*

9. The Sum of the Condition required of Chriſtians, is a firm Belief in Jeſus (in that main Article of his Reſurrection particularly) and an undaunted Profeſſion of his Truth, and of our dependence on Him, as our Maſter, and only Saviour.

10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation.*

10. This is the true juſtifying Faith, this the Confeſſion that gives a Title to Salvation.

11, 12, 13. And this Condition extends to all Mankind, not to Jews only; as the Prophets (*Isaiah* and *Joel*, particularly) have long since declared. See *Isai.* xxviii. 16. compared with *Rom.* ix. 33. and *Joel* ii. 32. compared with *Acts* ii. 16, to 21.

11. *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.*
12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.*
13. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.*

14, 15. Now as this Invocation supposes Faith, so does that Faith Instruction; and so again does that Instruction a Commission given to those that bring it. Such a one as *Esaias* prophesied of *Chapter* lii. 7, 8.

14. *How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*
15. *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

16. And if the Subject of our Preaching hath not been received as it deserved: This also agrees with another Prediction of the same Prophet, *Chap.* liii. 1.

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

17. All which makes it very evident, that though Faith do not always go with Instruction, yet it cannot come without it.

17. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

18. And was this Instruction wanting? No. The Publication of the Gospel hath been as extensive, as those Declarations of the Divine Honour, mentioned *Psal.* xix. 4.

18. *But I say, Have not they heard? Yes verily, words their sound went out into all the earth, and their unto the ends of the world.*

19. And can the Jews in particular pretend Ignorance? Nay even of this Dispensation, at which they now take so great Offence? No. *Moses* himself foretold it, *Deut.* xxxii. 21.

19. *But I say, Did not Israel know; First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*

20. And *Isaiah* yet more expressly, *Chap.* lxv. 1.

20. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

21. Nor does he declare the Thing only, but the Cause of it too, *Ver.* 2. assigning the postponing of the Jews to their own Obstinacy and Unpersuadableness.

21. *But to Israel he saith, All Day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

COM-

COMMENT.

ST. *Paul* had, in the beginning of this Epiſtle, proved at large, that the Method, appointed by God for the Juſtification of Sinners, is Faith in Chriſt, and Obedience to his Goſpel. *Chap.* iii, iv, v. *&c.* This led him, in the Chapter next before, to vindicate that ſurpriſing Diſpenſation, whereby the Jews (God's once peculiar People) fell from the Truth; and the Gentiles (till then Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe) were admitted to partake of the Privileges of Chriſtianity. To this Purpoſe he had explained thoſe Promiſes to the Patriarchs; by a falſe Interpretation whereof their Poſterity were miſled into a vain Imagination, that the Truth of theſe, and the preſent manner of God's proceeding, could not ſtand together. He had argued from the Freedom of God's Grace; and ſhewed, how abſolutely he is Maſter of his own Favours. He had urged, how agreeable the Diſtinctions, made upon this Occaſion, were, both to the Divine Juſtice, and to the Teſtimonies of their own Prophets. In the former part of this Chapter, he had compared the Conditions required by the Goſpel, with thoſe of that Law, to which the blind Zeal of his Adverſaries adhered ſo pertinaciouſly. Afterwards he goes on, in the Scripture now before us, to confirm what he had more briefly touched upon before, *viz.* That they who were rejected, had been ſo puniſhed for their own Fault; and They, who were taken in, were graciouſly rewarded for their ready Compliance with, and eager embracing of, thoſe Terms

Chap. ix. 6.

Ver. 14, 15, *&c.*

Ver. 21, *&c.*

Ver. 25, *&c.*

Chap. x. 3. 4, 5, *&c.*

Ver. 9, *to* 21. *Chap.* ix. 30. 31, 32, 33.

of Salvation, which it well became the Maker and Lord of All freely to provide for, and offer to, All.

Thus much may ſuffice for a convenient Repreſentation of the Apoſtle's main Deſign, in his Argument upon this Point. The Part hereof, made the Subject of our preſent Meditation, begins with that Condition, which is now required in order to Salvation. And, in regard a right underſtanding of this is evidently of the laſt Importance to every Chriſtian; here I ſhall fix my Thoughts, as the Principal, at leaſt a very profitable, Improvement of the Epiſtle for the Day.

Now the Matter, which I mean to treat of, we have in theſe Words, *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart, that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved. For with the Heart of Man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.* Ver. 9, 10.

In diſcourſing on this Matter, it will be proper to inquire into *Three* things.

I. *Firſt*, What is meant by that *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation*, which are here mentioned, as the Ends of, or Benefits to be obtained by, a Chriſtian's *Faith* in, and *Confeſſion* of, Jeſus Chriſt.

II. *Secondly*, Of what Nature and Extent that *Faith* and *Confeſſion* are, which we find here enjoined, as Means neceſſary in order to obtain thoſe Ends.

III. *Laſtly*, Wherefore the Apoſtle ſhould chooſe, in this Place, to compriſe under theſe Two the whole of a Chriſtian's Duty.

I. *Firſt*, I begin with examining, what is the true Senſe of that *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation*, which are here mentianed, as the Ends of, or Benefits to be obtained by a Chriſtian's *Faith* in, and *Confeſſion* of, Jeſus Chriſt. Now it ſeems very plain, that each of theſe Words is made uſe of by the Writers of the New Teſtament, in a different Extent, and twofold Senſe; But both the

One and the Other Senſe may be applicable to this Declaration of the Apoſtle, and proper (I had almoſt ſaid neceſſary) to be taken notice of, in a Diſcourſe upon it.

1. As for Righteouſneſs; This is ſometimes intended to denote no more than Juſtification, or an Acquittal from Sin paſt. Such is evidently the meaning of it, when *Abraham's Faith is ſaid to be counted for Righteouſneſs*; and when that Expreſſion is illuſtrated and explained, by *forgiving Inquities, covering Sins*, and *juſtifying the Ungodly*. Such again, when Men are ſaid, to *follow after*, or *ſubmit to* obtain, or to *be made the Righteouſneſs of God*: And in general, ſuch is the Senſe, where it is ſet to ſignify, not the Act, but the Benefit and Reward, of embracing the Goſpel; and ſtands in Oppoſition, not to the Crime, but to the Puniſhment, of Unbelief and Diſobedience. And thus (to omit other Inſtances at preſent) it ſeems to do, in the *Sixth* of this Epiſtle, at the 16th; Where Men are called the *Servants*, as *of Sin unto Death*, ſo likewiſe of *Obedience unto Righteouſneſs*.

Rom. iv. 3, 5, 6, 17.
Rom. iii. 25.
—ix. 30, 31.
—x. 3.
2 Cor. v. 21.

But the Word does alſo denote the good Actions and Diſpoſitions of Holy Men. Thus we read of the *Way of Righteouſneſs*, the *Works of Righteouſneſs*, the *Fruit* and *Effect of Righteouſneſs*, and many other Phraſes of like Importance. All which more eſpecially concern the Sanctification, and do not (like thoſe of the former ſort) belong ſo properly and immediately to the Juſtification, of Chriſtians. And yet this Righteouſneſs alſo (as I have formerly ſhewed at large) is a neceſſary Preliminary and Condition of the other, when taken in its moſt exalted Senſe, and extended to our full and final Juſtification. Which leads us to obſerve, in the next

Prov. viii. 20.
1 John iii. 7.
Phil. i. 11.
Hebr. xii. 11.

Epiſt. xiii. *S. after* Trin.

Place, a twofold Senſe of the Word *Salvation* alſo, as it ſtands here before us.

By Salvation then, we are ſometimes to underſtand that State of complete Safety and Happineſs, into which thoſe pious Souls enter, who (to uſe this Apoſtle's Expreſſion elſewhere) *ſhall be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus.* Accordingly we find it called *eternal Salvation*; We are adviſed to *take for a Helmet the Hope of Salvation*: We are ſaid, *to be kept through faith unto Salvation*; To *receive the end of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls*; And told, that *Chriſt ſhall come a ſecond time without Sin unto Salvation.*

1 Cor. v. 5.
Heb. v. 9.
1 Theſſ. v. 8.
1 Pet. i. 5.
Ver. 9.
Heb. ix. 28.

But, at other times, it is as evidently to be interpreted, not of the End and Perfection, but of the Way and Means to that Salvation. So I underſtand our Bleſſed Lord, when declaring to the Woman of *Samaria*, that *Salvation was of the Jews*; And to *Zaccheus*, that *Salvation was that Day come to his Houſe*; And St. *Peter*, that *Baptiſm doth now ſave us*; And St. *Paul*, that *God ſaved us, by the waſhing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*; and that the *Epheſians* were *ſaved by Grace through Faith*; And ſundry other Places, which clearly ſignify, not the actual Accompliſhments of, and attaining to, everlaſting Happineſs and Salvation: But partaking of the Means, and being put into the right Way, which if perſiſted in, will certainly lead Men to the full Poſſeſſion of it.

John iv. 22.
Luke xix. 9.
1 Pet. iii. 21.
Tit. iii. 5.
Eph. ii. 8.

II. Let us now proceed, in the *Second* Place, to examine into the Nature and Extent of that *Faith* and *Confeſſion*, Which are here enjoined, as means neceſſay for obtaining that *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation* already explained.

In

In a former part of this Work, I took occaſion to obſerve, that the Firſt and moſt obvious Senſe of Faith is an Aſſent of the Mind to ſome Truth, upon Authority of Teſtimony; And, that divine Faith is an Aſſent to ſome Truth revealed and teſtified by God. Thus *believing in the Heart* that God *raiſed Jeſus from the Dead*, is a firm Perſuaſion, that this was done in ſuch Time and Manner, and for ſuch Reaſons and Purpoſes, as the Word of God, in the Holy Scriptures, hath deſcribed and declared to us. Agreeably to this Conſtruction, *Confeſſing the Lord Jeſus with the Mouth* will import an open Acknowledgment of *Jeſus*, as the Son of God and Saviour of the World; veſted in all the Powers and Prerogatives, the Authority and Dominion, which the Title of *Lord* is deſigned to ſignify to us. *Epiſt.* xiii. *S. aft Trin.*

But it was farther obſerved, in the Place before referred to, that the Faith ſo highly commended in Scripture, hath generally, not ſome Truths barely ſpeculative for its Object, but Precepts and Promiſes alſo: And, that its Act is of a federal Nature, ſolemnly engaging for ſome Conditions required, in view of ſome Conſiderations offered, and Rewards annexed to them. And thus *believing the Lord Jeſus with the Heart* is owning him for our Lord, by covenanting to be his Servants; And *confeſſing him with the Mouth* is very properly applied to thoſe ſolemn Declarations of the Chriſtain Faith, uſual at Baptiſm; The Sacrament, which liſts us in his Service, and ſtrikes the Covenant made between God and Man in Jeſus Chriſt.

Again, as this Covenant engages the Perſon for Term of Life, ſo the Belief and Confeſſion, upon that occaſion, implies a firm purpoſe of Heart to perſevere in the ſame Perſuaſion, and to perform the Terms required on Man's part, faithfully and conſtantly. And hence it comes to paſs, that the whole of a Chriſtian's Duty is frequently comprehended under this ſingle Inſtance

ſtance of Faith. How properly and juſtly, I am now about to make appear, by enquiring in the

III. *Third* Place, Wherefore the Apoſtle ſhould chooſe, in the Paſſage before us, to mention this *Belief* and *Confeſſion*, as the Whole of that Condition, which entitles a Chriſtian to all the Privileges and Rewards, implied here by *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation*.

That this is an Extent of the Faith, to which our complete Juſtification is uſually aſcribed by St. *Paul*, might be made abundantly manifeſt, from thoſe Paſſages in his Writings, which ſpeak Of *Faith working* or actuating *by Love*; Of the Inefficacy of the Former, even in its higheſt degree, when not crowned with the Latter; Of *the Obedience of Faith*, and that declared to be an *Obedience both in word and deed*; And from the very many other Texts, enforcing and declaring the neceſſity of Piety and Good Works. Proofs of this Point, which have already been inſiſted on ſo largely, that, referring my reader thither, I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving, that ſuch, in all Reaſon, muſt be the meaning of *Faith*, in the place at preſent before us.

Gal. v. 6.
2. Cor. xiii. 2, 3.
Rom. xvi. 26.
---xv. 18.

Vol. III. pag. 423, 424.

Now of this, I think, we have good Intimation from the Context; Which makes *believing in the Lord*, at the 11th *Verſe*, and *calling upon the Name of the Lord*, at the 12th and 13th, Expreſſions illuſtrating and equivalent. As it does alſo, at the 16th *Verſe*, ſet *not obeying* and *believing*, as Terms of direct Oppoſition to each other. It being very ſure, that *calling upon God*, as well as *obeying* his Word is oftentimes put in Scripture, to ſignify a Man's Duty and Virtue in its utmoſt Latitude; And in Contrariety, not only to Irreligion or Unbelief ſtrictly underſtood, but to all manner of Ungodly Practice and Vicious Converſation.

Pſal. xiv. 4.
---liii. 4.
---lxxix. 6.
---lxxx. 18.
Jerem. x. 25.

To

To confirm this yet more, Let it be conſidered, what *Confeſſion with the mouth* muſt needs have imported, at the time of writing this Epiſtle. The Goſpel of Chriſt was then had in utmoſt contempt; The Profeſſors of it were not only derided, but moſt barbarouſly perſecuted; and all, that the Men of the World eſteem moſt dear, was made the Price of their Fidelity to this Lord. Hence it is eaſy to perceive, how different a thing the *Confeſſing Jeſus Chriſt* was then, from That which too many make it now; a matter of mere Form and Courſe, the complying with Faſhion and Cuſtom, and carrying an empty Title, with very poor, if any, regard to thoſe Obligations, implied in the Name and Character of Chriſtians and Diſciples. This is a cheap and eaſy Service; when all the temporal Encouragements and Advantages, which the Countenance of Government, and Credit of the World can contribute, conſpire to promote and recommend it: In compariſon of That, which was a bidding open Defiance to imminent Danger, and general Oppoſition. That was a degree of Reſolution, ſcarce conceivable to be attained, without long and ſerious Deliberation: And ſuch, as with rational Agents, can hardly be ſeparated from ſtrict Holineſs and Virtue. For ſurely They, who are not diſpoſed to live to Chriſt, can ſcarce be imagined capable of being content to forſake all, and to die for him. Here was no room for Hypocriſy and Time-ſerving; when All, who took upon them this Religion, were ſenſible, they did it at their utmoſt peril. They, in their very Baptiſm, declared War, not only with the Devil, and the Fleſh, but in the very ſtricteſt ſpeaking, with the World too; the Malice and Menaces, no leſs than the Pleaſures, and Vanities, and Allurements, of it. As therefore ſuch ſolemn Profeſſion at firſt implied a Proſpect and Purpoſe of encountring theſe difficulties: So the actual Performance of, and unſhaken Perſeverance in, that holy purpoſe, is a Virtue ſo exalted, as

may

may very well be preſumed to include a good Life; and to proceed from ſuch Aſſiſtances of Divine Grace, as cannot but determine the Perſon under its Influence, to all other Inſtances of Obedience whatſoever. And, as it is thus in the Reaſon of the things, ſo was it then in Fact and in Experience. Orthodox Believing and Careleſs Living are Abſurdities at all times; and ſuch as do not, in thoſe times, ſeem as yet to have met together in the ſame Perſon. Although therefore, at the rate Chriſtians now behave themſelves, (I am ſorry to ſay) there is too much occaſion for wondering, that Belief and Confeſſion ſhould imply a Life exactly ſuitable to our Principles; yet in thoſe early and better Days, this Senſe of the words was not at all ſuprizing. For then the Zeal and Vigour of Chriſtians was ſo conſpicuous; that every Man's Actions and ſhining Example were ſo many Demonſtrations of the Power of his Faith, and Ornaments to the Doctrine, which wrought ſo ſudden and thorough a Change in as many as received it.

Thus much I thought expedient, to ſhew what ground the Scripture now before us miniſters for interpreting St. *Paul* here, Not of a naked Faith, and formal Confeſſion of Chriſt; but in a Senſe, (ſo uſual in his Writings) which, by the mention of One principal Part, intends the Whole, of our Duty as Chriſtians. And, I think, it muſt be granted, that no one part could ſo properly have this latitude of Signification attributed to it, as That of Faith, upon the ſeveral accounts that follow.

1. If we reſpect the Nature of Faith in general. A little Reflection upon the Springs and Principles of Humane Actions may ſuffice to ſhew, that all things without, affect and excite us, not according as they really are in Themſelves, but in proportion to the Notions we entertain, and the Concern we apprehend ourſelves to have in them. Now Faith, being a firm Per-

Perſuaſion of the Truths contained in the Goſpel; (the Precepts and Promiſes, as well as the Articles of Doctrine) it follows, that this muſt needs be Firſt, not only in Time and Order, but alſo in the Quality of a Foundation, and Cauſe, and Root, fitted to ſhoot out, and produce all other Chriſtian Virtues, as its proper Fruit and genuine Effects. Theſe Effects it does not neceſſarily produce; becauſe it is not always a lively, but rather a dormant, Principle: For Men are often negligent in exerting its Powers. But yet they ſo naturally follow from thence, that, if we carefully attend to it, and do not ſuffer the Motive ſuggeſted by it to have their due force obſtructed, it will not fail to prevail for the making us in all points the Perſons we ought to be. The Scripture therefore, when magnifying the Efficacy of Faith, ſpeaks of it, as it is in its own Nature; and upon a Preſumption, that the Perſons poſſeſs'd of it, do their Endeavours to keep its Impreſſions always lively and ſtrong, and its Objects familiar to their Thoughts. And, where This is done, the Inducements to Obedience will be found ſo powerful, and the Conditions of obtaining them ſo reaſonable and neceſſary; that an aſſured Expectation of the Former will draw after it a careful diſcharge of the Latter. It is therefore of the utmoſt Importance, to be rooted and grounded in this common Principle of Goodneſs, A Principle, ſo ſuited to the Operations of Rational Souls, and whoſe Influence upon our whole Behaviour is ſo univerſal; that we may ſay of its Efficacy, with regard to the good or evil of our Lives, as our Saviour did with regard to his Miracles, *according to* the ſtrength or weakneſs of *our Faith, ſo ſhall it be unto us.*

2. To comprehend our whole Duty under this general term of *Faith*, was very uſeful for St. *Paul*'s deſign; Which is, to give his Converts a right Underſtanding of the gracious Condeſcenſions of the Chriſtian Covenant. There are two Errors, with regard to this matter,

matter, which, one may plainly diſcern, he found above all others neceſſary to be refuted. The Former ſuppoſed it poſſible to be juſtified by Works, done without the Grace of Chriſt: The Other, that Men by good Works, of any kind, were capable of meriting at the hands of God. In oppoſition to both which he proves, Firſt, That the Condition now required is far more eaſy and practicable, than any inſiſted on before: And Then, that This, even when made good in ſuch manner as now will be accepted, leaves yet no place for Confidence in our own Merit; but teaches us to be thankful for our Reward, as the Grace and free Gift of God.

The former of theſe Points St. *Paul* is actually upon, in the Paſſage now before us For having, at the fourth *Verſe*, mentioned the Advantage of *Chriſt being the end of the Law for Righteouſneſs to every one that believeth:* He proceeds, in the fifth and three following *Verſes*, to compare the Moſaical with the Chriſtian Diſpenſation. This Compariſon proceeds upon the different Conditions of obtaining Juſtification, under each of them. That of the Law ſaith, *The Man who doth theſe things ſhall live by them.* That is, An exact Performance of all the Precepts then enjoin'd, was neceſſary, to entitle Men to the Bleſſings and Rewards then covenanted for. But This of the Goſpel ſaith, *Say not in thy heart, Who ſhall aſcend into Heaven? that is, to bring down Chriſt from above: Or, Who ſhall deſcend into the deep? that is, to bring Chriſt again from the dead. But what ſaith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach. That, if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* The true Importance whereof I conceive to be thus much: That what *Moſes* had ſpoken, concerning the

Ver. 5.

Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Moral

Moral Law (for this is the Subject of his Diſcourſe there, and not the Ceremonial) is much more applicable to the Goſpel. If the Will of God were then plain and eaſy to be underſtood; (for of underſtanding the Law it is that *Moſes* ſpeaks) much more is it ſo now, after ſo full a Revelation of it by the Doctrine of Chriſt, and the Propagation of that Doctrine by the Preaching of his Apoſtles. But then the Goſpel hath this manifeſt Advantage; that the Law, though eaſy to be known, was yet exceeding difficult to be performed; and never was or could be fulfilled, by any Abilities of its own furniſhing. For the Goſpel does not, as the Law did heretofore, propoſe ſuch Terms of Obedience, as the Strength of Humane Nature, unaſſiſted by Grace, muſt needs find inſuperable Difficulties in.

And yet this, the Reader hath formerly ſeen, was manifeſtly the Caſe of the Law which propoſed Juſtification by Works: *Vol.* III. *Com. in* Epiſt. xii. xiii. S. *aft. Trin.*

In regard, that a Man might be abundantly convinced of the Reaſonableneſs, of the Neceſſity, of the Obedience required; might waſh, might diligently apply himſelf to it; might lament, and moſt earneſtly ſtruggle with his Infirmities; and yet never be able, either to conquer thoſe Infirmities he continually ſtrove againſt; or, through the Impotence of his Condition, to attain that Perfection of Obedience, which he ſincerely deſired, and earneſtly laboured after.

But with the Goſpel the Caſe is quite otherwiſe. For This ſuſpends all our Bleſſedneſs, upon the Belief in, and Diſcipleſhip to, Jeſus Chriſt; An holy truſt in his Truth and Merits; And a firm aſſurance of His Reſurrection. All which are eaſy, in compariſon of the other: Becauſe all of them poſſible to every one, who will act rationally and wiſely. And ſuch they manifeſtly prove themſelves to be, Whether we conſider the Duty to be perform'd, Or the Motives inciting to it. In Both which regards, the Evangelical Righteouſneſs hath vaſtly the advantage above the Legal.

The

The Hardſhip of the Legal is abundantly plain, not only from the Reaſoning of St. *Paul*, in ſundry places of this Epiſtle, (which prove the univerſal Corruption of Human Nature, and conſequent thereupon, the Impoſſibility of punctually diſcharging either the Moral or the Levitical Law;) but alſo, by his uſing here thoſe Words of *Moſes*, *aſcending into Heaven*, and *deſcending into the deep*. For Theſe are, in the *Hebrew* Tongue, proverbial Expreſſions, denoting invincible Difficulties. On the contrary, *Being nigh* in People's *Mouths and Heart*, are Phraſes in that Language, as commonly known to import, that the thing ſo ſpoken of is practicable and eaſy. And ſuch is the Faith and Confeſſion here mentioned. This requires no more, than a diligent and unprejudiced application of the Mind to objects revealed by God; A firm Aſſent, upon ſufficient Evidence of ſuch Revelation; And a careful Practice of thoſe Virtues, which that Aſſent (if duly attended to, and purſued through all its Conſequences) will naturally enforce, and carry Believers into. All this no Man can reaſonably complain of, or demur to; becauſe it expects no more from Any, than All are capable of: Even fair Dealing, and Conſideration, Sincerity and Conſtancy, Receiving Principles eſtabliſh'd upon good grounds; and Acting in agreement and conſiſtence with them, when ſo receiv'd and ſolemnly profeſs'd.

Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13, 14.

Again, As this is a Condition of Happineſs, which Men are better qualified for diſcharging: So is it ſuch, as they muſt in all reaſon be more powerfully diſpoſed for undertaking, than That enjoined by the Law. It is with that of Religion, as with all other Service and Labour. The toil and trouble of the Duty is evermore leſſened, in proportion to that Spirit and Vigour of Expectation, which the Proſpect of a Recompence inſpires. As then the Certainty and the Value of that Recompence riſe; the difficulty of performing the Condition, preparatory

paratory to it will not fail to ſink. Now the Circumſtances of the Law and the Goſpel are as different in this regard, as Time and Eternity. The Former contracted expreſly for Temporal Felicities only; The Latter promiſeth a Reward of Bliſs, more truly and eminently ſo, than at preſent any of us is able to conceive. And all we can ſay of it (which yet is more than enough to command the utmoſt of our Endeavours and the eagereſt of our Deſires) is, that God hath deſigned to render us complete in that State to come, by the Proviſion of a Happineſs, which can never have any Interruption, any Abatement, any Concluſion. Conſequently, The Faith, which aſſures us of ſuch a Reward, muſt needs be a Duty more practicable than a Law of Works was; ſince That impoſed a heavier Burthen, and yet did not come furniſhed with Advantages, in any Degree comparable, to ſupport Men under it.

2. I come now to obſerve, how ſuitable the comprehending our whole Chriſtian Duty under the Name of *Faith* is, to another Part of St. *Paul*'s Deſign; That of deſtroying all Confidence in any Merit of ours, which ſuch Obedience might be falſely ſuppoſed to have. To this purpoſe it is, that we find the Apoſtle ſetting ſo often in direct Oppoſition to each other, not only Faith and Works, but alſo the Law and the Promiſe; and frequently aſſerting the Inconſiſtence between them. *If they* (ſays he) *which are of the* Law, *be heirs*; Faith *is made void, and the* Promiſe *made of none effect.* Rom. iv. 14. And, *If the Inheritance be of the* Law, *it is no more of* Promiſe. Gal. iii. 18. And, *To Him that worketh, is the Reward not reckoned of Grace, but of Debt: Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be by Grace*; Rom. iv. 4. *Ver.* 16. And, *where is boaſting then? It is excluded. By what Law? of Works? Nay: but by the Law of Faith.* ----iii. 27. And, *By Grace ye are ſaved through Faith, and that,* Eph. ii. 8.

not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God. To make these, and sundry other Texts of like Importance, appear in their full force; it must always be remembered, that the Works so zealously disclaimed by this Apostle, are such, as Men were therefore apt to value themselves upon, because they were supposed to perform them by their own proper Strength. Herein agree all Virtues done in Conformity to the Law of Nature; (the Discovery and the Motives whereof proceeded from a right Improvement of Natural Reason.) Herein all Acts of Obedience to the Law of *Moses* too: Because, though directed by God, yet they had not the Promise of any Supernatural Assistance. And therefore, as to the Discharge, could that have been punctual and full, they must be allowed the Person's own entirely; though, in respect to the Knowledge and Discovery, they were not entirely His.

But now the Obedience meant here by *Faith*, is the very Reverse of all this. The Foundation of it is laid in a Belief of such Truths, as Mankind must for ever have remained in Ignorance of, had not God of his Mercy *made known the Riches of his Glory, and the Mystery which had lain hid from Ages and Generations.* The Motives to it are those *exceeding great and precious Promises*, which no Obligation lay upon Him to make; We can therefore ascribe them to no other Cause, but to his own free Goodness; and a Love, as undeserved, as it is unconceivable. And which is yet more, The effectual Assent to that Mystery, and the Compliance with these Motives, are Consequences of that *Spirit* and his *Grace*, which enables and disposes us to Obedience, and leaves us no part in our best Actions, but that of a dutiful and diligent Concurrence with those Operations, from whence *all our holy Desires, all our good Designs, and all our just Works, do* originally *proceed.* And what Glory, what Merit, can accrue from

Col. i. 26, 27.

2 Pet. i. 4.

from thoſe Actions, whoſe Beginning, Progreſs, End and Efficacy, are all from another Hand? Surely to Him alone belongs the whole Honour, who hath wrought the whole Work in us; and without whom we could neither have known, nor deſired, nor done, nor obtained Acceptance or Reward for, any thing that is commendable or good. For nothing can ſo truly be called our own, as our Follies and Sins, our Neglects and our Infirmities.

1. Once more. I obſerve, That, As the whole Duty of a Chriſtian is very properly compriſed in *Faith* and *Confeſſion*; So is the whole Object of that Faith and Confeſſion very ſignificantly intimated, by ſpecifying that ſingle Article of our Lord's Reſurrection from the Dead. The Intent whereof would be very much miſtaken; ſhould we from hence infer, that nothing more than the hearty Belief, and publick profeſſion of this Article alone was in thoſe Days required. For it were eaſy, at this rate of interpreting, to argue, that even this Article was not neceſſary to be ſolemnly confeſs'd of every Chriſtian; by comparing and ſticking perverſly to the Letter, where the Baptiſms on the Day of Pentecoſt, of the Eunuch, of St. *Paul*, of the Jaylor at *Philippi*, and of the Diſciples at *Epheſus*, are related. And yet in all theſe Caſes, the Context, well attended to, will warrant our concluding, that the Reſurrection, and ſundry other Articles not expreſly mentioned, were openly aſſented to before, and in order to Baptiſm. As therefore *Calling on* or owning the Name of *Jeſus*, Or declaring a Belief that he *is the Son of God*, Or the like, are not excluſive in thoſe Paſſages; ſo neither is his Reſurrection, in this now before us, excluſive of the reſt. The Truth is, All theſe are compendious ways of intimating, and a ſufficient Implication of all other (and theſe ſeem to have been ſeveral) Fundamental Points of Chriſt's Religion,

Acts ii. 38, 41.
—viii. 37, 38.
—ix. 18.
—xvi. 31, 33.
—xix. 5.

gion, to which a publick Aſſent was ſolemnly declared by every Proſelyte, then received into it.

Contenting myſelf therefore with this brief Admonition, in how large a Senſe ſome Scriptures are to be underſtood: Where, by an uſual Figure of Speech, the Whole is intended, though ſome principal Part only be mentioned: I ſhall aſſign a Reaſon or two, why Jeſus being *raiſed from the Dead* ſhould be choſen by St. *Paul*, to imply that Faith, which is *believed unto Righteouſneſs with the heart, and confeſs'd with the mouth unto Salvation.*

Now this might be choſen, *Firſt*, Becauſe ſo unanimouſly oppoſed by Adverſaries of all ſorts, that the aſſerting it was a certain Teſt and Character of a Chriſtian. The Death of *Jeſus* was the Boaſt of Jews, and no matter at all of Controverſy with the Gentiles. But ſtill the Former judged that Death inconſiſtent with his Meſſiahſhip; And, as They were Infidels in the End and Purpoſe of his Death; ſo were Mankind in general, in the point of his Riſing again. This therefore the Apoſtles laboured chiefly to eſtabliſh. The neceſſity of a proper Choice to ſupply the place of *Judas*, is laid upon having a Perſon competently qualified, to join his Teſtimony with the Eleven, concerning our Lord's Reſurrection. The ſame is urged, as a Demonſtration of God's *making Jeſus both Lord and Chriſt*, in the ſeveral Accounts of People converted to the Faith by the Preaching of the Apoſtles. The Conſtancy of thoſe Apoſtles, and the Atteſtation of Miracles vouchſafed them, in that Office, are ſtyled *giving with great power witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus.* The Subject of St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe at *Athens*, was *Jeſus and the Reſurrection.* And, to mention but one Inſtance more, how diſtinguiſhing an Article this was then eſteem'd; After profeſſing an Agreement with the Jews in other Tenets, he reſolves

Acts i. 22.
---ii. 24, &c.
---iii. 15, &c.
---iv. 10, &c.
---v. 30, 31, 32.
---x. 41, &c.
---xiii. 30, &c.
---iv. 33.
---xvii. 13.

reſolves the difference between them into this; *Touching the Reſurrection of the dead I am called in queſtion.* An Expreſſion home to our preſent purpoſe: For himſelf explains it thus before *Agrippa*, That he acted conformably to the Prophets, who declared, *Chriſt ſhould be the firſt that ſhould riſe from the dead.* ---xxiv. 21. ---xxvi. 23.

2. This Article was very fit to imply all the reſt, by reaſon of the Light and Evidence it reflects upon them all; and the mighty Importance attributed to it, for aſſuring to us the Benefits and Comforts of the Goſpel. By this we prove the Divine, as well as Humane, Nature of our Saviour. *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, made of the ſeed of* David, *according to the Fleſh, is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.* By This, the End and Efficacy of his Death; for, as He *was delivered for our Offences, ſo was he raiſed again for our juſtification.* Rom. i. 3, 4. ---iv. 25.

By This, his Aſcent and Exaltation to the Throne of God; For *the ſame mighty power, which raiſed Chriſt from the dead, did alſo ſet him at God's own right hand in heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, might, and dominion, and every name that is named,* &c: *And hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church,* &c. This gives us the Certainty of a future Judgment; For God *hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Hence we learn the Divinity of the Holy Ghoſt; Becauſe He, who is ſo often ſaid to be raiſed by God, is alſo ſaid to be *put to death in the fleſh, but quickened by the Spirit.* By This (as I ſhewed before) Chriſt became *the head of the Church:* By This we hope to gain that Remiſſion Eph. i. 19, 20, 21, 22. Acts xvii. 31. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

miſſion of Sins, which is conveyed in the Sacraments of the Church; For *Baptiſm doth now ſave us* (ſays St. *Peter*) *by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt*; and *We are therefore buried with him in Baptiſm*, (ſays St. *Paul*) *that, like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of Life.* By this again we are certified of our Own Reſurrection; for *Chriſt is riſen the Firſtborn from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſleep*: And we *know that he which raiſed up Jeſus, ſhall alſo raiſe us up by Jeſus.* And laſtly, by this all good Chriſtians are aſſured of everlaſting Life and Happineſs; For Himſelf declares, that he is gone *to prepare a place* for ſuch; and *that he will come again, and receive them to himſelf, that where he is, there they may be alſo.* Thus the Author to the *Hebrews* ſtyles him *Our Forerunner, who is entred into Heaven for us.* And St. *Paul* in like manner, *If we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo alſo Them which ſleep in Jeſus ſhall God bring with him, and ſo ſhall they be for ever with the Lord.*

1 Pet. iii. 21.
Rom. vi. 4.
Col. i. 18.
1 Cor. xv. 20.
2 Cor. iv. 14.
John xiv. 2, 3.
Heb. vi. 19, 20.
1 Theſſ. vi. 14, 17.

From hence it appears, how broad a Foundation this Article of our Bleſſed Redeemer's Reſurrection lays, and how ſpacious and weighty a Superſtructure it is capable of ſuſtaining. Inſomuch, that a Chriſtian hath little elſe to wiſh, for the ſettling his Mind, and determining his Judgment, in the Principles of this Religion; but evident Proofs of that eſſential Point, which, in effect and by plain Conſequence, proves and illuſtrates the whole Scheme. And in this regard, it is our Glory to have the fulleſt and moſt inconteſtable Satisfaction, that any matter of this nature can afford. Atteſtations the beſt grounded, the moſt impartially examined, the moſt clearly delivered, the moſt miraculouſly confirmed, the moſt conſtantly

ſtantly perſiſted in, the moſt carefully tranſmitted to ſucceeding Ages, that ever any Fact could pretend to. In a word, Such, as all who ſtand out againſt muſt ſtand ſelf-condemn'd; becauſe it cannot be any rational Uncertainty or Doubt, that detains them in Error or Unbelief; While, at the ſame time, they make no Difficulty of venturing their All in other Matters of higheſt Importance, upon the Credit of Teſtimony infinitely weaker, and Proſpects of Advantage infinitely leſs engaging. To which purpoſe I add,

3. *Thirdly*, and *Laſtly*, As the Examples, mentioned under the *Laſt* Particular, do all conſpire, in ſhewing the Fitneſs of extending the Belief of our Lord's Reſurrection to all the Articles of our Chriſtian Faith: So do Thoſe laſt mentioned, more eſpecially prove the Fitneſs of extending it to Faith in the largeſt Senſe of the Word, as That includes all parts of Chriſtian Practice. Thus St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of being *riſen with Chriſt* in Holineſs of Life, attributes this Effect to the Belief of *the Operation of God, who hath raiſed him from the dead.* And St. *Peter* ſays, *God hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead:* Even that *hope*, which (as St. *John* obſerves) *every one that hath, purifieth himſelf, even as He is pure.* In a word, The firm Perſuaſion of our Lord's Reſurrection infers the Certainty of our Own. And the State, to which the Scriptures promiſe We ſhall riſe, is ſo perfectly happy and glorious; that no Man, who diligently conſiders, and is ſtedfaſtly aſſured of it, can think any think too hard to be done, or endured, in order to attain it. Faith is called, by the Author to the *Hebrews*, *the Subſtance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not ſeen*: That is, ſuch an Aſſurance, as the Mind could not reſt upon, even in Poſſeſſion, more firmly: becauſe things diſtant and future are thus rendred

Col. ii. 12.

1. Pet. i. 3.

1. John iii. 3.

Chap. xi. 1.

dred always preſent to it. And is it to be imagined poſſible for Men (think you) to value any thing comparably to, or to decline any undertaking, any ſuffering for, the Joys of Eternity, ſuppoſing they had a diſtinct Sight and Feeling of them? Poſſible for any, not to flee from Sin, and dread every guilty Approach toward it, more than Racks, and Fires, and Croſſes, the moſt exquiſite Tortures, and worſt of Deaths; did but the ghaſtly Scene open, and ſet before their Eyes the Pains and Anguiſh, the inſupportable and everlaſting Wrath, which the Damned endured? Would any Temptation, though otherwiſe never ſo inſinuating, be able to make its way, and ſeduce one, in deſpight of ſuch ſenſible Demonſtrations as Theſe? It is not to be conceived. And yet all, that would be done this way, might (and if we were not wanting to ourſelves, would) be done without it: Even by the Shield of a true, conſiderate, lively, and vigorous Faith; Which, though proceeding upon another ſort of Evidence, can yet no more deceive us, than the Evidence of Senſe itſelf.

This Faith will therefore be an active Principle, always exciting and invigorating our Obedience; And by the force of ſo excellent a Reward in Proſpect, not only equal, but (if duly attended to) infinitely exceed, all Difficulties and Obſtructions, which might otherwiſe diſcourage the Performance of our Duty. Becauſe it will ſhew ſo vaſt a Diſparity, between the Service enjoined and the Recompence in reſerve for it, as allows no manner of Compariſon, between the Poorneſs and Imperfection of the One, and the infinite Value and complete Felicity of the Other. But, having touched upon this Argument already, I ſhall only make One ſhort Reflection, from the Heads ſo largely inſiſted on, and with that conclude this Diſcourſe.

Now from hence, I moſt heartily wiſh, that Men would take occaſion ſeriouſly to conſider their Duty, rightly to underſtand the Privileges of their high Calling, and parti-

particularly to guard againſt two very different and dangerous Opinions, which unwary People have faſtened upon This, and ſundry likes places of Scripture. All which, I conceive, were eaſy to be effected, by having due regard to thoſe Diſtinctions, laid down under my *Firſt* and *Second* Heads.

How warm hath been the Diſpute, in this part of the Chriſtian World particularly, concerning the Sufficiency of Faith, and the Neceſſity of good Works, in order to Salvation? And yet, All might be amicably compoſed, and Errors in both Extremes prevented, by attending to the different Senſes, and Subjects, to which the ſame words are applied in Scripture; So as not to confound theſe, or bring them in Evidence, for Conſequences, quite out of the purpoſe of Each of the places reſpectively.

A Man, for inſtance, may obſerve *Faith* to be (as to be ſure it often is) uſed for the Aſſent to, and federal Confeſſion of, the Truths revealed by Chriſt, at entring into the Goſpel Covenant; and he ſhall at the ſame time find *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation* attributed to ſuch Faith. And yet he will ſee no ground from thence to infer, that Faith without good Works, after Baptiſm, can ſave him: If he withal remember, that by *Righteouſneſs*, is ſometimes intended no more, than the Remiſſion of Sins paſt before Baptiſm: And, that *Salvation* ſometimes means no more, than being brought into the true and right way, which will at laſt be ſure to ſave all, who continue in it to the end. For there is a manifeſt difference, between God's releaſing all former Debts, and admitting us to a new Contract with him: And requiring no Account, how we perform that Contract afterwards; The Conditions whereof we, at entring into it, did, by our own Act and Deed, bring on as a ſubſequent and voluntary Debt upon ourſelves.

On the Other hand, A Man may diſcern, that *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation* are ſometimes ſet to ſignify the Sancti-

Sanctification of Perſons, and the final everlaſting Happineſs prepared for the faithful in Heaven. In Conſequence of This, he may clearly ſee, and boldly aſſert, the neceſſity of good Works, done in the Covenant, and with the Grace of Chriſt. And yet he may be far from thinking thoſe Works the meritorious Cauſe of our Salvation; or derogating in the leaſt from any of thoſe glorious Effects, aſcribed to Faith in Scripture. The reaſon is, Becauſe, As thoſe others are, ſo is the Word Faith alſo, ſometimes taken in a very large Extent. And Then it does very properly and very naturally, include all Chriſtian Virtues and Graces whatſoever. And, in This more extended Senſe of *Faith*, and in That more exalted Senſe of *Righteouſneſs* and *Salvation*, it is certaintly true, that none but ſuch as *order their Converſation aright, ſhall ſee the Salvation of God.*

Pſalm. l. 23.

I cloſe this Remark with the Words of our Excellent Church, whoſe Judgment, and Prudence, and great Temper, I would to God all her Adverſaries would impartially conſider, and all her Members carefully imitate.

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the Merit of our Lord Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, by Faith, and not for our own Works or Deſervings. Wherefore, that we are juſtified by Faith only, is a moſt wholeſome Doctrine, and full of Comfort. But then obſerve what follows. *Albeit Good Works which are the Fruits of Faith, and follow after Juſtification, cannot put away our Sins, nor endure the Severity of God's Judgment; Yet are they pleaſing and acceptable to God in Chriſt; and do ſpring out neceſſarily of a true and lively Faith, inſomuch that by Them a lively Faith may be as evidently known, as a Tree diſcerned by the Fruit.*

Artic. of Relig. xi.

Artic. xii.

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The GOSPEL.

St. Matt. iv. 18.

18. *JEſus walking by the ſea of Galilee, ſaw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, caſting a net into the ſea; (for they were fiſhers.)*

19. *And he ſaith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fiſhers of men.*

20. *And they ſtraightway left their nets, and followed him.*

21. *And going on from thence, he ſaw others two brethren, James the Son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ſhip with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.*

22. *And they immediately left the ſhip and their father, and followed him.*

PARAPHRASE.

18. To underſtand the whole Procedure of our Lord upon this occaſion, the Reader need only caſt his Eye back on the Goſpel for v. Sund. after Trin. Vol. III. Pag. 249. to 253.

COMMENT.

THE Paſſage now before us, gives an account of our Lord's calling four great Apoſtles, (to the Memory of One of which this Feſtival is ſacred) and of Their ready Compliance with that Call. The Deſign of that Call was, to make them powerful Inſtruments of inſtructing and profiting Others; to enter them into a Profeſſion, for the due Diſcharge whereof all their time and pains would be little enough; And therefore it was expected, they ſhould give themſelves wholly to it. A Profeſſion, whoſe End it is to wean our Affections from the preſent World; Of which Each of them hath ſet us a noble Example, in ridding himſelf preſently of all ſecular Intereſts and Incumbrances, and by an entire Application to his new Maſter's Buſineſs. For that's the meaning of *immediately leaving their Nets*, their Ships, and their Father, *and following Jeſus*: That they, from thenceforth, became his inſeparable Attendants; Sharers of his Labours and his Fortunes;

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No longer ſolicitous for themſelves, or their Families; But entirely depending on His Bounty and Bleſſing, for their future Proviſion and Subſiſtence.

The manner of my treating this Subject ſhall be,

I. *Firſt*, To ſhew the Motives, which, we may reaſonably preſume, induced the Perſons here to this Compliance.

II. *Secondly*, To obſerve the Virtue of that Obedience. And,

III. *Thirdly*, To conſider, how far They, in ſo doing, are a proper Pattern for our Imitation.

1. The Motives, which ſeem to have induced the Perſons mentioned here to this Compliance, are ſuch as follow.

1. Of the Apoſtle of this Day in particular it is certain, from the Firſt Chapter of St. *John*, (and of the Reſt it is highly probable) that they had been trained under *John the Baptiſt*. Now the very Intent of *John*'s being brought into the World, and living in it, after ſo uncommon a manner, is expreſly declared to be, that he might *prepare the way* for *Jeſus*, by preaching the Doctrine of Repentance, and *turning the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt*. To this eminent Perſon God manifeſted his Son, by the Viſion of a Dove, and a Voice from Heaven. Of which he bore ſo conſtant and faithful Teſtimony, that neither the Admiration of the Jews, nor the Emulation of his own Diſciples, could ever prevail with him, either to ſuppreſs it, or to take to himſelf thoſe Honours and Opinions, which might prove any Diminution to the Meſſiah. From him were evidently derived the firſt Notices, which *Andrew* and his Brother *Peter* had of Chriſt. Nor is it to be conceived, that any Retainers to Him ſhould continue ignorant of that Perſon's Character, whoſe Preference above himſelf *John* took ſuch care perpetually to inculcate; and ſo to raiſe a due

John i. 36---40.

Luke i.

Vene-

Veneration for, and turn his Hearers at laſt over to, a far greater and better Maſter.

2. But, beſides what theſe Diſciples might have learnt from the Baptiſt, they had other Motives of Obedience, even from *Jeſus* himſelf. For He was, before this Call, ſufficiently diſtinguiſh'd, by his Miracles and his Doctrine. St. *Matthew* indeed, agreeably to his uſual conciſeneſs, places this Action, next after our Lord's entrance upon his publick Miniſtry, and gives only a ſhort and ſummary Account of it. But St. *Luke*, whoſe manner is more large and expreſs, informs us of many Preachings in the Synagogues, many Devils caſt out, many Diſeaſes healed, great and frequent Concourſe of admiring Crouds; And, which might more contribute to the gaining theſe Fiſhermen, the Scene of all thoſe Actions lay in *Capernaum*, and other Towns bordering upon the Sea of *Galilee*, where They trafficked and inhabited. *Chap.* iv.

Add to all this the Circumſtances of the Call itſelf. Of which (as hath been formerly demonſtrated) Chriſt did not make the Experiment, till he had firſt inform'd their Judgments, by teaching the Multitudes out of one of their Ships, and had brought the Power of his Doctrine home to their Senſes, by commanding a miraculous Draught of Fiſhes, in the very place where they had toiled all Night, and caught nothing. So that, After a Reputation ſo eſtabliſh'd, Inſtructions ſo divine, Wonders ſo aſtoniſhing, and the Impreſſions of One, in their own way, ſo freſh upon them, theſe Fiſhers might very well juſtify their entring into the Service of ſuch a Maſter. And we ſhould have more cauſe to wonder at their declining, than we can have, at their forwardneſs, to *leave all* and *follow Him*. The accounting for which, in the manner you have ſeen, I take to be much more ſatisfactory; than aſcribing it to any ſuch commanding Luſtre in the Perſon and Countenance of our Lord, as *Goſp. S. v. after Trin. Vol. iii.*

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ſome have imagined. For aſſerting That I know not that the Scriptures give us any Authority. And the Arguments here alledged ſeem to render it as unneceſſary, as the Word of God hath left it uncertain.

I cannot let this Particular quite go, without One Reflection, naturally riſing from the Method now taken in proof of it. From this Inſtance, I mean to obſerve, how uſeful it is to interpret Scripture, by reading, conſidering, and diligently comparing, the ſeveral parts of it together. Moſt Errors in Religion, and either accidental or wilful Miſconſtructions of the Evangeliſts and their Writings, had been prevented by this Care. How vain, for the purpoſe, are the pretended Abſurdities, and inſolent Reproaches of *Porphyry*, upon the Inſtance now before us, grounded on St. *Matthew*'s Relation alone? Where is the Suſpicion of Falſhood in the Hiſtorian? Or allowing him to ſay true, where is the blind Enthuſiaſm, and frantick Zeal, which he charges this Action with, when St. *Luke* is alſo taken into the Account, and the order of the whole Proceeding rightly ſtated from them both? The Apologies of the Fathers ſhew the Caſe to be much the ſame, with all the bitter Invectives, againſt which they defended the Faith. The only Confutation, then ordinarily needful, was to ſet the matter in its true Light, by that Evidence and mutual Illuſtration, which ſeveral Paſſages treating of the ſame Subject do mutually contribute to each other. It is certainly a great Inſtance of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Providence, that the Doctrine and Deportment of *Jeſus* are tranſmitted to the World by ſeveral Hands. And an Argument it is alſo of their dealing truly with us, that, although writing at Times and Places far diſtant, yet all of them ſhould ſo expreſs themſelves, as never once to contradict, but frequently to clear and aſſiſt each other. Would therefore All, would even the Unlearned, improve the Helps afforded them in the Margin of their Bibles; by conſulting

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the parallel Texts referr'd to there; they would ſoon feel, that Each Evangeliſt is beſt underſtood by the ſtudy of the Reſt. And at laſt ſo juſt an Harmony would reſult from all together; that, notwithſtanding any ſeeming Harſhneſs from little Diſcords, No neceſſary Truths would be undiſcovered, No dangerous Errors entertained, no Inconſiſtencies or Difficulties of moment remain incapable of being fairly reconciled, by ſuch Readers. So ſhort, ſo eaſy, and withal ſo uſeful a way to Divine Truth, I thought this a fit Occaſion to recommend. Which I do yet more earneſtly; becauſe the moſt ſatisfactory and full of aſſurance, of any whatſoever. The Commentaries of Learned men may be very entertaining and inſtructive; but we can never ſit down with ſo perfect acquieſcence in the meaning of God's Word, as when the Holy Ghoſt condeſcends to comment and expound upon himſelf. All therefore, who ſincerely deſire to have Scripture truly and fairly underſtood, labour to eſtabliſh this ſort of Explication; by which the Light divine, falling on different Points, is, by drawing them into a proper Poſition, reciprocally reflected from each upon the other. That of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* being applicable to this Caſe alſo; *As no Man knoweth the things of a Man, ſave the Spirit of Man which is in him; Even ſo the things of God knoweth none ſave the Spirit of God.* He alone could at firſt reveal them; He is the ſure Guide in all our Studies of the Truths ſo revealed; And his own Dictates are incomparably the brighteſt Evidence to form our Notions upon. 1 Cor. ii. 11, &c.

II. From this Digreſſion (if it deſerve to be thought one) I come now, in the *Second* place, to obſerve the Virtue of theſe Apoſtles, in obeying the Call of *Jeſus*. Without juſt and ſufficient Inducements, we may allow this *following* to be Raſhneſs and Folly; for no Action can be Virtuous, which is not Rational. God certainly deals

deals with us, as he made us; and requires nothing at our Hands, of which a good account may not be rendred to any conſidering and impartial Mind. But herein lies the Virtue; When difficult and diſtaſtful Caſes offer, to preſerve the Mind free and clear, the Judgment open and unbyaſs'd, the Affections regular and flexible, and the whole Man ready and reſolv'd to ſubmit and act, as his Conſcience, after all due Care for informing it aright, ſhall declare to be neceſſary or fit for him. Look upon the Goſpel at its firſt ſetting out; Look upon the different Succeſſes of it ever ſince; You ſhall find the Entertainment and Influence of its Doctrine conſtantly to have anſwer'd to the Failure or the Diſcharge of its Hearers Duty in this point. The ſame *Jeſus* who with a Word of his Mouth prevailed upon theſe Apoſtles to follow his Perſon and his Fortunes, did yet work Miracles without number, and multiply Sermons and Conferences, among the Jews, with very little effect. The reaſon is, Theſe Men were not only well inſtructed, but well diſpoſed; and, thro' the Efficacy of his Grace, content, nay glad, to leave the World for Him: Whereas the Scribes and Phariſees, whoſe Hearts were ſet on ſecular and diſhoneſt Advantages, reſiſted that Grace, and determined not to believe him at any rate.

The Rich young Man came much better (and, as he thought, ſufficiently) prepared, to undertake any Condition, requiſite for attaining Eternal Life. His Breaſt reproached him not with the expreſs Breach of any Precept in the Moral Law; And yet He, whoſe former Diligence to live well had made him confident of his own Innocence, when brought to the Tryal, was found far ſhort of Perfection. *Go ſell that thou haſt, and give to the Poor, and come and follow me,* was a Command too hard of Digeſtion. And yet a poſitive Promiſe of *Treaſure in Heaven,* in Recompence for the Poſſeſſion to be aban-

Mat. xix. 16, &c.

abandoned upon Earth, was added for his Encouragement; and an Admonition, that he was not invited to Loſs, but to a wiſe and profitable Exchange.

So much below theſe Fiſhers was even the Man, who could ſay *All theſe have I kept from my Youth up:* Nay who, as if that had been a Virtue too low for the Greatneſs of his Mind, aſpires after nobler degrees of Goodneſs, and asks, eagerly, *What lack I yet?* It may perhaps be anſwered, that *this young Man had greater Poſſeſſions*, and ſo more to endear the World to him, than theſe Apoſtles. But when it is conſidered, that They readily left their All; Be that All leſs or more, we ſhould injure their Character, not to think, that the Difference of Circumſtances in this Compariſon, was not near ſo great, as that of Diſpoſitions: And that, whatever their Eſtates had been, they would cheerfully have given the ſame Proof, how far they preferr'd the Service of God before that of *Mammon.* Eaſe and Proſperity muſt be allowed to knit the Net ſtronger; But All, whoſe Condition is not perfectly deplorable and indigent, get a good Conqueſt over themſelves, when they break through it, by ſhaking hands with a Fortune or Employment, which, though ſomewhat inferior, hath yet any comfort and competency in it. And therefore it was no vulgar Virtue in theſe Fiſhers, to quit a Trade laborious indeed, but yet a creditable and honeſt Subſiſtence; and to caſt themſelves and their Families at once, upon the future Care and Providence of One, who openly diſclaimed the World, and had not, of his proper Poſſeſſion, ſo much as *where to lay his Head.*

Matt. xix. 20.

Ver. 22.

III. Having thus ſpoken to the Caſe of the Apoſtles, I come, in the *Laſt* place, to the Profit we ſhould make of it: By conſidering, how far this Behaviour of Theirs is a Pattern fit for Our Imitation.

That it is not ſuch in all points is moſt evident; by reaſon our Condition in many regards is not, and in ſome cannot be, parallel to Theirs. Our *Firſt* Step

therefore toward Improvement by this Example muſt be, To diſtinguiſh, wherein our Circumſtances differ, or agree: And the next is, from the Correſpondence ſtill between us, To form a Judgment of ſuch Calls, and prepare our Hearts for ſuch Compliances, as, in the preſent ſtate of the Goſpel, and of our own Affairs, we continue capable of.

As to the Former of theſe Particulars; There is a manifeſt diverſity between our Calls to Chriſt, and that of theſe Fiſhermen, both for the Manner, and the Matter, of them.

1. For the Manner. We have not now the happineſs of converſing with *Jeſus* in the Fleſh. Our Ears are not charm'd with the Sound of his gracious Words, nor our Eyes entertained with the wonderful Operations of his divine Power. And ſo our motive to obedience is not the very ſame with Theirs, whoſe Evidence of Senſe wrought firſt Aſtoniſhment, and then firm Belief. We read, and hear, and receive theſe things by a diſtant report: They were preſent to them. A Difference, by ſome thought material enough to excuſe Men from yielding, at this time of day, an aſſent like Theirs heretofore; Who are pretended to have been under ſo much more forcible means of Conviction.

But this is a poor Evaſion. For I take leave to ſay, that We have, in ſome regards, ſo much the advantage even of Them, who converſed with *Jeſus*, and ſaw his mighty Works; as muſt, I conceive, render our Infidelity and Diſobedience in no degree leſs inexcuſable than Theirs. The Apoſtles ſaw Chriſt's State of Humiliation, and they ſaw That only; at the time when this Call wrought upon them. We have known not That only, but his Glorification alſo: The Power of his Reſurrection from the Dead; The punctual Accompliſhment of all his terrible Threatenings againſt the Jewiſh City and Nation; And that moſt amazing of all Miracles, the firm Eſtabliſhment and vaſt Extent of his Kingdom,

Kingdom, by the Propagation of his Goſpel, and Perpetuity of his Church, in deſpight of all the Subtilty and undermining Arts of Diſputers and Deceivers, all the Treachery of Hypocrites and falſe Friends, all the implacable Rage and bitter Perſecutions of malicious and avowed Enemies. All this We ſee, and feel, and enjoy the effect of ſtill: And ſuch Events they are, as no leſs Cauſe can account for, than the peculiar Favour, and irreſiſtible Power, and ſtupendous Wiſdom, of an Almighty God, evidently aſſerting and ſuſtaining his own Inſtitution.

Farther yet. Though we do not now ſee the Lame ſtrengthened, nor the Blind enlightened, nor the Lunatick and poſſeſſed reſtored, nor the Dead raiſed in our Villages and Cities: Yet, even for theſe Works which demonſtrated *Jeſus* to be the Son of God, we have all the Evidence that is proper, all that is poſſible, for Matters of this nature. The conſtant Teſtimony of Men in all Ages and Conditions; too many to be impoſed upon; in Intereſts too different to combine for impoſing upon others; and in a Cauſe, which miniſters no Temptation for any ſuch Impoſture, admitting it to have been practicable. This is ſufficient to convince Reaſonable and Unprejudiced Perſons; and the Unreaſonable and Prejudiced nothing will convince. To Such we find the, now ſo much extolled, Evidence of Senſe was not effectual. Nor did the daily Wonders of our Saviour convert an equal part of all that ſaw and ſtood aſtoniſhed at them. From all which I preſume we may infer, that They, who are now called to Chriſt by the Impreſſions of his written Word; by the Voice of his Miniſters; by the Ordinances and Sacraments of his moſt holy Religion; and by the ſecret Motions of his Grace, working in, and with, and by their own Wills and Conſciences; are ſtrictly obliged to hearken to ſuch Calls. For tho' the Method of Calling be not the ſame to all; yet the Evidence of that Call is to all

ſo full, as, at their utmoſt Peril, to engage their Obedience.

2. Again. As the Call of theſe Apoſtles differs from that now ordinarily vouchſafed, in the Manner of making it; So does it likewiſe, in the Matter, or thing required by it. They were drawn off from their Secular Employments, and commanded ſo to follow their Maſter, as to depend upon His Proviſion for the future. But the Generality of Chriſtians are required to *work with their own Hands*; to *abide in their* reſpective *Callings with God*; in ſhort, not to quit their Profeſſions, but to do their Duty in them. And this Duty is well done, by an honeſt induſtrious Care for our Selves and Families; when that Care is not ſuffered to get ſo far within us, as to ſhut out thoſe meaſures of Living, which Juſtice and Decency, Beneficence and Charity, the Offices of Religion, and the placing our Treaſure and Hearts in Heaven, demand from us. The World may be our Concern, provided it be not our Only, nor our Chief Concern: And the Comforts of it may be eſteem'd Good, ſo they be not miſtaken for our ſupreme Good. So plain it is, that the Call, which our Church, in this Day's Service, prays God we may be ready to obey, is vaſtly different from That, vouchſafed to the Saint of it and his Companions. Let us in the *Laſt* place look, what Correſpondence there is, which ſtill continues to affects us: And for That I beg your Attention to the Two following Particulars.

Ephes. iv. 28.
1 Cor. vii. 24.

Collect.

1. *Firſt.* The Caſe of theſe Apoſtles is ſo far our Pattern, that, whatſoever is enjoin'd us by Chriſt in his Word, we ſhould immediately ſubmit to it; Whether it be any Truth commanding our Belief, Or any Precept calling for our Practice. Such a Submiſſion, be ſure, I mean, as agrees with the Character given of theſe Apoſtles, in the former part of this Diſcourſe.

courſe. Such, as is the reſult of Wiſdom and Deliberation, a reaſonable Service and a well-weighed Choice; All Heat and Precipitance apart on the One hand; All Obſtinacy and Prejudice, on the Other. Nor is this neceſſary to be urged upon Them only, who have as yet not received, or are not well acquainted with, the Principles of Chriſtianity: But even They, who profeſs and know theſe beſt, are not always ſo happy, as to attend to every part of them juſtly. How greedily do Men take an Opinion, wherein their own Affairs are not concern'd; and yet ſtand out againſt much ſtronger Evidence for Others, which happen to croſs their Intereſt, or bear hard upon ſome beloved Error, with which they have been long prepoſſeſs'd? How quick and ſagacious are moſt of us in diſcerning, how ſevere in judging, how ingenious and officious in expoſing and rebuking, the Faults and Failings of our Brethren; and at the ſame time how blindly partial; how ſlow in diſcovering, how ſubtle in extenuating, nay, how zealous in juſtifying, the very Same in our Selves? How many *Herods* have we, who hear their Preachers gladly, and are content to do many things of their adviſing; but when the Point of *Herodias* is touched; when any Favourite Luſt or Darling Pleaſure is reproved, then the *deaf Adder ſtops her Ears, let the Charmer charm never ſo wiſely.* That Paſs ſhall be maintain'd at any rate: And they are not, cannot, will not, be perſuaded. Now what a mighty Difference is there, between a Perverſeneſs ſo inflexible as This, and the eaſy yielding Temper of theſe Apoſtles? Would They, can we think, have been detained by any ſingle Obſtruction, who ſo cheerfully devoted to Chriſt Themſelves, and their All at once? Sure then we little conſider Their Behaviour, or have conſidered it to little purpoſe; if it do not draw us ſo far at leaſt towards an Imitation, as to hearken patiently, and go in dutifully, to any One unpalatable Doctrine for His ſake.

2. Once more. This Example ſhews, how looſe the things of the preſent World ought to ſit about us. The Command of *going and ſelling all we have and following Chriſt* is what very few are put upon; but yet it is that, which Every one ought to be provided for. Now the beſt Preparation for abandoning that, which cannot be kept without Guilt, is to employ it innocently and virtuouſly, while we have it. It is not Wealth, but the inordinate Love of Wealth, that juſtifies the Compariſon of the Camel and the Needle's Eye. For how ſmall is the Appearance, that a ſordid Wretch, who cannot find in his Heart to ſpare a part of his Superfluities to pious or charitable Uſes, will be brought to ſacrifice the Whole even of his Neceſſaries, to God and a good Conſcience? *Uſing this world* therefore *as not abuſing it*, A conſtant thankful Senſe of all we have being lent us from above, Enjoying it with Modeſty and Meekneſs, Dedicating a Portion of it to the Service of the Great Proprietor, Conſulting the Honour and Dignity of his Service, the Decency and Beauty of his Houſe, Laying out our Pains and our Poſſeſſions upon publick Benefactions, for increaſe of Arts and Sciences and honeſt Induſtry; and ſtudying to render the Talents intruſted with us the moſt inſtrumental that may be to the Benefit of Others: Theſe Diſpoſitions and Actions are a good ſtep towards being well content, nay glad, to purchaſe a diſtant Treaſure in Heaven, with a Surrender of all our Subſtance upon Earth. And, if we be ſo reſigned, as to *take up our Croſs and follow Chriſt*; that is, to ſtrip off every Comfort, even Life itſelf, when called to it; then have we attained to the Grace of theſe Apoſtles. And as oft as God by his Providence orders Matters ſo, that a Man's Honours, or Riches, or Employments, cannot be preſerved with a good Conſcience: In a word, When any Chriſtian is reduced to an unavoidable Neceſſity, of either

1 Cor. vii. 31.

ther ſinning or ſuffering; then is he called by Chriſt; then ought he to underſtand the Obligation to be as great, and the Command as expreſs and peremptory, as if (like this Apoſtle) he had heard the Voice of Jeſus ſounding in his Ears, *Leave all and follow me.*

Some indeed have thought it the moſt eminent and acceptable Obedience to this Call, to run away out of the World, and ſhake hands with all Buſineſs and Avocation at once, by devoting their Perſons to a Cloiſter, and their whole Subſtance to Piety. Far is it from my Purpoſe, to derogate from any Methods, proper for promoting Heavenly-mindedneſs and Contempt of the World. But doubtleſs ſuch a Reſolution, like all others that are full of Zeal, ought to be well regulated; founded upon true Principles, and tempered with great Diſcretion. It is not for every Man to renounce an active Life, and deprive the Publick of a ſerviceable Member, in a Station of Care and Truſt: Nor are Any Man's Poſſeſſions ſo entirely his Own, but that his Family and his Friends have ſome right to ſhare in them. We ſee, our Lord highly condemns the Jewiſh *Corban* of Corruption and Hypocriſy: And what was That, but making over to pious Uſes, that which ought to have ſuſtained Fathers or Mothers; Thoſe, to whom Nature hath, either made us Debtors already, or given an equitable Expectation of being profited by us?

Let thoſe then, who are deſirous to imitate theſe Apoſtles in leaving all and following Chriſt, be careful eſpecially to imitate that firſt Circumſtance, of ſtaying till He call them. But call them He does not, till all things are ſo ordered, that no Relation or Capacity wherein they ſtand, no Duty or Benefit juſtly expected from them, ſhall come under a Neceſſity of remaining unſatisfied, by means of ſuch a Choice.

Now This being a Caſe, which happens much ſeldomer than Men are aware; It ſhall ſuffice for Us, and for Chriſtians in general, To uſe what the Bounty of God

hath given us conſcientiouſly; To promote, and, as we can, be liberal and rich in pious and good Works; Not to be guilty of any evil thing for the greateſt Advantage; If our deareſt Enjoyments cannot be preſerved with Innocence, to give them up cheerfully; And, how low ſoever reduced, to take every Appointment of the Divine Providence patiently and contentedly; Truſting God, both for preſent Supplies, and for a future Reward. This is truly *to give ourſelves up obediently to fulfil his holy Commandments*: And They who thus paſs *through things Temporal, ſhall not fail in the end of things Eternal: Through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

Collect.

Collect. iv. *Sund. aft.* Trin.

St. THOMAS's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. THOMAS.

THE Name of this Apoſtle, (and *Didymus* the Interpretation of it) ſignifies a Twin. Of his Deſcent and Country Scripture makes no mention. Nor of his Education and Buſineſs; except, from the Company and Employment we find him in, at the xxiſt of St. *John*'s Goſpel, we ſhould infer, as ſome have done, that he was a Fiſherman, and concerned with *Peter* in carrying on that Trade.

Three of the Evangeliſts take no other notice of him, than what regards his Call to the Apoſtleſhip. St. *John* alone is particular concerning him. He firſt acquaints us with his Behaviour, upon our Lord's determining to go and raiſe *Lazarus*. The Other Diſciples, upon making this Motion, remind our Lord of that implacable Malice, which lately appeared in the Jews attempting to ſtone him; and, ſince he

John xi.

he thought that a juſt Occaſion for withdrawing beyond *Jordan*, they could not ſuppoſe, he would think it proper, ſo ſoon to put himſelf in the way of ſo much Danger again. Our Lord had, at the 9th Verſe of that Chapter, given them a Parabolical Intimation, that his Hour was not yet come. But This, being either not underſtood, or not effectually applied; after other Diſcourſe to ſet this Journey aſide, upon our Lord's ſaying, *Lazarus is dead—nevertheleſs let us go to him: Thomas ſaid unto his Fellow-diſciples, Let us alſo go, that we may die with him.* *Ver.* 14, 15, 16.

St. *Chryſoſtom* makes this an Argument of greater Cowardice in *Thomas*, than in any of the reſt: Others look upon it, as an Inſtance of Affection and Reſolution. The moſt natural Interpretation ſeems to be, That though he ſaw nothing but Death like to follow, upon their going again ſo near *Jeruſalem*; yet if Jeſus were determined to hazard his Perſon, it would ill become Them to deſert him, whatever the Conſequence might be. This Senſe appears to be neceſſary, if by dying with *Him*, be meant of Jeſus. And the *dying with Lazarus* carries ſo much of Irony and Poignancy, as was neither decent in reſpect to our Lord, nor at all agreeable to this Apoſtle's manner; For, how full of other good Qualities ſoever he might be, he ſeems to have been ſlow enough of Apprehenſion. This appears, not only from the Meaning of our Saviour, at the 9th and 10th Verſes, not being underſtood; in which his Brethren were equal with him; but more ſo, from another Inſtance in the xivth Chapter, where our Lord's Words are more intelligible. And moſt of all, by that unperſuadeable Stiffneſs in the Point of Chriſt's Reſurrection; which makes the Subject of this Day's Goſpel. *Ver.* 5.

The Province aſſigned to this Apoſtle's Labours, was *Parthia*. St. *Chryſoſtom* adds *Æthiopia*; *Gregory* Euſ. L. III. C. 1. Hom. in 12. Apoſt. Orat. in Arrian.

gory Nazianzen, India. Some Learned Men of late doubt of this laſt. At leaſt they think the Name of St. *Thomas Chriſtians* no Evidence at all; and aſcribe Their Original to one of the ſame Name, many Centuries after. But it hath generally been received, that St. *Thomas* did not only preach, but ſuffer Martyrdom, in *India:* And that he was lanced to Death by the People; whom the Idolatrous *Brachmans* had inſtigated thus to diſpatch a dangerous Oppoſer of their Idolatrous Worſhip. The Account of him in St. *Jerom*'s Catalogue is ſo ſhort, that I will conclude with it. "*Thomas* "the Apoſtle, as the Common Tradition goes, preach-"ed our Lord's Goſpel to the *Parthians, Medes,* "*Perſians, Germans, Hyrcanians, Bactrians,* and *Ma-*"*gi:* And died at the City *Calamino* in *India.*" If this Authority be good, why may not the *Magi* explain to us what ſort of *Æthiopians* St. *Chryſoſtom* means? Thoſe probably of the ſame Country, (near *Chaldea*) from whence They came, who worſhipped our Saviour in his Infancy. Whether thoſe very Perſons, let the Reader, who is diſpoſed to enquire, believe as he ſhall ſee cauſe.

La Sueur ad Ann. Chr. 60.

The COLLECT.

St. John xx. 24—30.

ALmighty and everlaſting God, who, for the more Confirmation of the Faith, didſt ſuffer thy Holy Apoſtle *Thomas* to be doubtful in thy Son's Reſurrection; Grant us ſo perfectly, and without all doubt to believe in thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, that our Faith in thy Sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the ſame Jeſus Chriſt, to Whom with thee, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

The EPISTLE.

Eph. ii. 19.

19. *NOW therefore ye are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God:*

PARAPHRASE.

19. By virtue of Chriſt's Blood and Faith in Him, not only Jews but Gentiles, indeed the whole Company of Believers, are no longer under any Reſtraints or Diſtinctions, like Sojourners;

Sojourners; but rather like Inhabitants, Perſons of the ſame Community, who ſtand equal in all Privileges, and, like thoſe of the ſame Family, have free acceſs to the Maſter of it, even God.

20. *And are built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief cornerſtone:*

20. Nay, like parts of the ſame Building, ye all ſtand upon the Doctrine of the Apoſtles under the New. which is exactly of a Piece with that of the Prophets under the Old, Teſtament. And Jeſus Chriſt is the Key-Stone and Center of Union.

21. *In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

21. In Him it is, that every part of this Foundation and Superſtructure both reſts. Nor is this a Common Houſe, but one conſecrated to God for Holy Uſes.

22. *In whom ye alſo are builded together; for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

22. Even a Temple, where he dwells by the Preſence of His Spirit; a Spirit of Unity and Peace, in which the Edification of his Church properly conſiſts.

COMMENT.

I Have had frequent Occaſions to obſerve, with what Indignation the Jews received the Admiſſion of the Gentiles to a Partnerſhip in the Knowledge of the Goſpel. They, to whom alone the Oracles of God were formerly committed, Rom. iii. 2. bore themſelves ſo high upon this moſt valuable Privilede; as to imagine that Method injurious to Them, which enlarged the Extent of any New Revelation, beyond the Limits which had bounded the Legal one. And even, when the Converſion of *Cornelius* and ſome Others, warranted Acts x. xi. by Viſions and miraculous Gifts, had abundantly declared God's gracious Deſign of granting to the Gentiles alſo *Repentance unto Life*; yet did their Vanity ſtill ſuggeſt a Notion of ſome neceſſary Reſerves in that Grant. They fancied, ſome Diſtinctions muſt be ſtill kept up, between ſuch as before had been term'd the Heirs of Promiſe and the Children of the Kingdom; and Others, called to this Light from the groſſeſt Darkneſs, and raiſed out of the very Dregsof Mankind.

kind. This Opinion the Converts from the Law brought along with them into Chriſtianity. Which turned, both to their own mighty Prejudice, from the natural Effects of ſo falſe a Confidence; And to the great Diſcouragement of thoſe, who had come directly over from Heatheniſm, without any regard at all paid to the *Levitical* Inſtitution.

Of this latter Sort were the *Epheſians*. To whom St. *Paul* addreſſing, labours to make them ſenſible of the happy Change they had made; who, from the loweſt and moſt deplorable Eſtate, of Men *without Chriſt, aliens from the Commonwealth of Iſrael, ſtrangers from the covenant of promiſe, without hope, and without God in the world*; were not only *made nigh*, but in all Points equal, to the Perſons, who had ſhared in thoſe Covenants and Advantages before. This Equality of Advancement is proved, *Firſt*, from the Univerſal Redemption wrought by the Death of Chriſt; And *Then*, by the Unity of that Body, into which the whole Aſſembly of Believers are thereby compacted. In Proof of theſe, he makes uſe (1.) Of ſome Alluſions, borrowed from the old Law; (2.) Of the Extent of that Commiſſion, by which the Goſpel is preached; And (3.) Of ſeveral figurative Repreſentations. To theſe I muſt at preſent confine my Thoughts, becauſe they make the Subſtance of the Epiſtle for this Feſtival.

Ver. 12.
Ver. 13.
Ver. 14.
Ver. 15.
Ver. 16.
Ver. 14.
Ver. 15.
Ver. 17.
Ver. 19, &c.

It is not my deſign to treat here of the Unity of the Church, in the utmoſt Latitude of that important Point: But only to obſerve, ſo far as the Expreſſions in this Scripture lead us, What ſort of Union that is, by which the ſeveral parts of it are knit to each other; and then, What are the Uſes and practical Inferences, fit to be by us collected from ſuch Repreſentations.

This

This Union is ſometimes illuſtrated by the Allegory of Natural, ſometimes by that of Civil, and at other times by that of Artificial, Bodies. Of the *Firſt*, As the Apoſtle here makes no mention; So neither is it needful for my purpoſe to make any, after ſo large an Explanation of it, as hath been given heretofore. The *Two* others, lie now before us. That of a Civil Body, at the 19th Verſe, where the *Epheſians* are ſaid to be *no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God.* That of an Artificial Body, in the Verſes following, *Ye are built*, &c. *Epiſt. for* 1. *S. aft.* Epiph.

As to the Former of Theſe; It may be proper to conſider, that it was uſual with the Jews, to permit Men of other Nations to join themſelves to the God of *Abraham*, and to allow them both Civil and Religious Advantages, in proportion as they were content to oblige themſelves, to more or leſs of their Laws and Cuſtoms. But even They, who undertook the Whole, were not eſteem'd to ſtand upon the ſame foot, with the Natural Stock of *Abraham*; And, as a mark of the Difference between them, went therefore ſtill by the Name of *Strangers*. With regard to this Diſtinction, the Apoſtle may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to acquaint his *Epheſians*, That thoſe Titles, and Differences of Advantage, were now at an end. And that, in Chriſt, it matter'd not, whence any Man was deſcended; ſince the *Partition Wall was broken down*, and the Benefits of the Goſpel thrown open to all the faithful in common. *Ver.* 14.

It is alſo notorious, that in every City, many Perſons are permitted to injoy the Protection, mutual Converſation, Friendſhips, and ſundry other Conveniences of Inhabitants at large; who yet, having no Concern in the municipal Laws and Cuſtoms, Exemptions and Advantages of the Corporation, continue *Foreigners* to

the

the Conſtitution, though not to the Place. Theſe are properly the παρόικοι or *Foreigners*, ſpoken of here by St. *Paul.* In oppoſition to whoſe precarious State, he aſſures his Heathen Converts, that even They come in to a full Claim of every Immunity and Benefit, granted to the *Saints*, to any of the Faithful, whatſoever. That all are now upon the ſame Level, and hold by the ſame Charter: Notwithſtanding ſome before were deteſted, as vile and impure; and Others of them dignified with the Character of a *Holy Nation*, and *Peculiar People.*

But we may very lawfully indulge a greater Latitude of Conſtruction: And, without regard to converted Jews and Heathens, apply the word *Saints* to Believers, not of all Countries only, but of all Ages too. And what a ſpacious View does this open? How glorious a Society is That, which conſiſts of the Spirits of all the juſt Men, that ever were, or ever ſhall be, made perfect? What Freedoms, what Honours muſt thoſe be, which theſe ſhining Lights are exalted to? And (as the Immunities and Benefits of Bodies corporate are not confined to Dwellers upon the Spot, but follow the free Denizen, whitherſoever he goes) What an Encouragement is it, in our preſent ſojourning, that, even at this diſtance, we have a Right to the ſame Privileges, and are making forward to the ſame full Enjoyments? In a word, The noble Hopes which this Conſideration ſhould inſpire, The generous Emulations of Their Virtues which it ſhould provoke, The Conformity to the Manners and Uſages of that Heavenly City, which it ſhould effectually perſuade, are Subjects, which I ſhould reckon it both a Pleaſure, and a Duty to enlarge upon; had not that been done in another part of this Work, to which I beg my Reader's leave to refer him.

Epiſt. xxiii. *S. eſt.* Trin.

To bring this Union yet nearer, Chriſtians are ſaid here to be *of the Houſhold of God.* Fellow-Citizens have

have indeed a very profitable and engaging Relation to each other, in point of Properties, and Commerce, and mutual Intereſts: But even the neareſt of Theſe muſt give place to Theirs, who compoſe the ſame Family. Eſpecially, when our Capacity in the Family is conſidered, that *we are no* longer *Servants, but Children.* And conſequently this implies all the Ties of Blood, the Sonſhip, the Adoption, the Inheritance. Concerning which I again refer my Reader to Two former Diſcourſes upon that Subject.

Epiſt. Sund. after Chriſtm. *and* viii. *Sund. after* Trin.

The Next Reſemblance, made uſe of by the Apoſtle, is that of an Artificial Body; and ſignifies the Unity of the Chriſtian Church, by comparing it to a Building. In which he is ſtrengthened by St. *Peter* alſo; who ſays of Them, who have received the Faith, that *they come to Chriſt, as unto a living Stone, and are themſelves, as lively Stones, built up a ſpiritual Houſe.* The Expreſſions of *lively Stones*, and a *ſpiritual Houſe*, do ſufficiently intimate the boldneſs of the Metaphor; and forbid too critical an Enquiry, after the Agreement of the Similitude in every Circumſtance, with the Thing figured by it. It will therefore be an Inſtance of our Wiſdom, as well as Modeſty, to contain our Thoughts within the compaſs of ſuch Circumſtances, as St. *Paul* hath thought it proper to ground this Compariſon upon.

1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

Now the Firſt Argument before us, of the Church's Unity, is taken from its having the ſame Foundation. So the 20th *Verſe, Ye are built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner-ſtone.* The ſame Apoſtle elſewhere compares his Labour in propagating the Goſpel to *Building*; He gives to the Brethren in Commiſſion with him at *Corinth*, the ſtyle of *Labourers together with God*; and to the Diſciples converted by their Doctrine, that of *God's Building.*

Rom. xv. 20. 1 Cor. iii. 9. 10. ---ii. 12.

Building. He diſtinguiſhes himſelf by the Title of a *wiſe Maſter Builder*, who had *laid the only true Foundation, even Chriſt Jeſus.* He warns all others againſt advancing unſound and hurtful Doctrines, by bidding them look well, what Materials they lay upon this Foundation. Now, by comparing theſe Texts, it will be eaſy to diſcern the Meaning of St. *John*'s Deſcription of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*, by a

Rev. xxi. 14, 19. *City, whoſe Wall had twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apoſtles of the Lamb.* And again, how Jeſus Chriſt being declared the Only Foundation, can agree with this Aſſertion, that the Church is *builded upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets.*

The Apoſtles, though later in time, are yet firſt named, becauſe ſuperior in Dignity to the Prophets. Theſe only ſaw, and foretold, at a great diſtance, thoſe bleſſed Events, of which the Other ſaw and recorded the entire Accompliſhment. Theſe had the Graces and miraculous Powers of the Holy Ghoſt more ſparingly; which the Other had, in the moſt plentiful and aſtoniſhing meaſures, imparted to them. Theſe laid the firſt imperfect Ground-work of that Spiritual Fabrick, which the Apoſtles carried up and put the finiſhing hand to. And both the One and the Other are called the Foundation of that Faith, in which They, by their Preachings and Writings, were the Inſtruments of building Men up. But Jeſus Chriſt is ſtyled the Foundation, becauſe he is materially and primarily, not only miniſterially or inſtrumentally ſo. That is; The wonderful Oeconomy of his Incarnation, All that he did and ſuffered for Mankind, And all the noble Ends and Effects of it, are the adequate Object of a Chriſtian's Faith. And the laying this Foundation was a Work common to Prophets and Apoſtles Both. Both agreed in the ſame deſign of their Miniſtry; Both delivered Doctrines in ſubſtance the ſame

ſame; The Difference between them lay only in the manner of propounding this Object. For, according to the different Periods, in which they lived and taught, the ſame Jeſus was repreſented: As yet more obſcurely, in Expectation, and to come; Or elſe explicitely and fully, as in Poſſeſſion, and already come. And hence he is called the *Corner-Stone*; as That, in which the ſeveral parts, not of the Building only, but even of the Foundation alſo, center and are ſupported. This renders Jews and Gentiles both one Houſe; This renders Prophets and Apoſtles both One Foundation: And, the Faith being one and the ſame, as to the Subject-matter of it; the Church of God, built upon and diſtinguiſhed by that Faith, is conſequently One and the ſame, from the Beginning to the End of the World. It being always true, with regard to the ordinary Methods of Grace and Salvation; that there *is not*, nor ever was, *any other Name under Heaven given unto Men, whereby they muſt be ſaved, but only the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* In a word, As the Church, with regard to this Object of its Faith, is termed the One Church of Chriſt; He being the material and the efficient Cauſe of it; So, with regard to their Doctrine and Miniſtry, who were thus the ſubordinate and inſtrumental Cauſe, it is ſtyled the one Apoſtolick Church. Acts iv. 12.

Such is the Church's Unity with reſpect to its Faith and Foundation. Next follows that, which concerns the carrying up of the Structure, *Ver.* 21. *In whom all the Building fitly framed together groweth*, &c. This *fit framing*, to which the Improvement of the Church is attributed, denotes that Union of Charity and mutual Aſſiſtance, which, in the parts of a Building, reciprocally ſuſtaining and ſuſtained by each other, make both the Strength and Beauty of the Houſe. The Argument is farther illuſtrated, in a following Chapter to theſe *Epheſians*, under another Me- *Chap.* iv.

taphor ſerving to the ſame purpoſe. Of which intending to treat more largely hereafter, I forbear this part of the Alluſion now, and proceed to obſerve the Nature, End, and Uſe of this Building; ſignified in thoſe Words, which affirm it to *grow unto an holy Temple in the Lord*, and in *Him to be builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Epiſt. St. Mark.

The Tabernacle and Temple, under the Law, were ſucceſſively Types of our Bleſſed Lord, and his Church, under the Goſpel. Of our Lord, with regard to his own Perſon; And that, as upon other accounts frequently intimated in the new Teſtament; ſo particularly, in reſpect of that *Shechinah*, or glorious Preſence of the Divine Majeſty, which manifeſted itſelf by viſible Tokens, in the Sanctuary; but dwelt in the Humane Nature of Chriſt, *fully and bodily.* But it farther repreſented our Lord, conſidered in Conjunction with, and as Head of, his Myſtical Body, the Church; who have alſo Their part in the Figure. Thus every part of the Legal Sanctuary, being formed and ordered by Divine Appointment, denotes the Church entirely founded upon, builded in, and finiſhed by, God himſelf. The whole of That, being dedicated to his immediate Service, inſinuates the Holineſs, required from *every living Stone of this ſpiritual Houſe.* The Neceſſity of offering acceptable Sacrifices there only, implied, that it is, through Chriſt alone, and by virtue of our Relation to Him, that any Man can have acceſs to the God and Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh. The diffuſing that Glory ſometimes, in a moſt illuſtrious manner, ſo as to fill the whole Houſe; And, the conſtant reſidence of it there, to aſſert God's Property and peculiar Favour; Theſe were lively Images of that Spirit, and its Graces, ſhed upon the Chriſtian Church: Sometimes in moſt exuberant Bounty,

Col. ii. 9.

1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

Epheſ. ii. 18.

by

by Gifts miraculous, and Operations altogether ſupernatural and amazing: Always in thoſe Ordinary and ſufficient Aſſiſtances, by which Believers may be diſtinguiſhed to be His, and rendered conformable and well-pleaſing to their Head; As partaking of, and acted by, his own Spirit, of whoſe fulneſs they receive, as he ſees fit to diſtribute to them. Theſe are, and ſundry other Particulars might be, properly brought, to juſtify the Reſemblance and Relation, between God's Material Houſe under the Law, and his Spiritual one under the Goſpel. Concerning which I obſerve farther, from the Paſſage now in hand, that the Holineſs of this Houſe, or its being a Temple, depends altogether upon the Concern which the Holy Spirit hath in it, *In whom ye are builded together, for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.* Col. i. 19. John i. 16. Ver. 22.

Thoſe laſt Words, *through the Spirit*, though in a true Senſe applicable, and by ſome applied, to the Former part; do ye ſeem much more naturally to belong to the latter part of the Verſe. For they acquaint us, not ſo much by what means Chriſtians are built into an Houſe, as how that Houſe ſo built, becomes a *Temple* to the Lord. To the like effect this Apoſtle hath expreſs'd himſelf elſewhere, *Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any Man defile the Temple of God, him will God deſtroy; for the Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are.* And again, *Know ye not, that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* And once more, Expoſing the Abſurdity of communicating in Heathen Rites, He asks, *What Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God,* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. ---vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16.

God, and they ſhall be my People. The Force of all which Reaſoning lies here: That, by the Communication of his ſanctifying Graces, God abides in the Hearts of Chriſtians: That the peculiar Reſidence of God in any Place diſtinguiſhes it from thoſe of common Uſe and Eſteem, and gives him the ſole Property in it: That the Reaſon holds equally with Spiritual, as with the Outward and Material, Dwellings of God. And therefore thoſe Perſons, of whom the Church of Chriſt is compoſed, are, every one of them, as ſtrictly ſeparated to his Uſe, as firmly aſſerted to be His, by the Inhabitation of that Divine Spirit, (which is elſewhere in this Epiſtle emphatically ſtyled *his Seal* upon them) as ever the Jewiſh Sanctuary was of old; in which the viſible Tokens of the Divine Majeſty declared his peculiar Preſence, and inviolable Right.

Eph. iv. 30.

From this ſhort Illuſtration of the Words, in the Order they lie before us, it may be of uſe to make the following Remarks.

Firſt, We may learn from hence, as was hinted before, that the Church, as that ſignifies the true Myſtical Body of Chriſt, is, and can be, but One. Becauſe the ſame eſſential Terms of uniting Members into it have always been, and always ſhall continue, unalterable. They muſt be ſo, as to the Matter and Subſtance, tho' not as to the Meaſure and Circumſtances of them. This is the ſame City, to the Privileges whereof Men of all Ages and Places are admitted: This is the ſame Houſe and Temple, into which all the Living Stones are compacted: This the ſame Company of Perſons, however named or diſtinguiſhed, before, or under the Law, and entitled Chriſtian under the Goſpel. No Time, no People is excluded from this Society. And therefore the ſame Arguments, which prove this Church to be *One*, do likewiſe prove it to be *Catholick* or *Univerſal.* From whence again,

Secondly,

Secondly, We may infer, that, howſoever we read of ſeveral Churches in Holy Writ, or elſewhere; Theſe are no other, than ſo many diſtinct parts of the Church, in its moſt proper and extenſive Senſe. They are all Members of this Body, all Apartments of this great Houſe, all Companies in this populous City. And, though all theſe are conveniently conſidered as ſeparate, With regard to the places where they are ſituate; The Limits of Dominion, which circumſcribe them; The temporal Conſtitutions, with which they are incorporate; And the ſeveral Juriſdictions, they have right to exerciſe: Yet ſtill, (all difference in thoſe and any other regards of leſs Importance notwithſtanding) they are but One in the main; and can no farther deſerve the Title of Churches, than as they agree in all Eſſential Parts, with that Univerſal Church, diffuſed over the Face of the whole Earth. An obvious Image hereof we have, Both in Cities or Boroughs, in the ſame Kingdom; And alſo in thoſe Societies, into which different Myſteries or Profeſſions, are reſpectively formed, within the ſame City. Their Diſcipline, Authority, By-Laws, and Exemptions, have full force upon the Members of their own diſtinct Body. But yet all thoſe Leſs are united into One Greater and Comprehenſive Body; and All bound to act in Subordination, and Agreement, with the Fundamental Laws of That. The Company is included in, and controlled by, the City; The City or Borough, by the Nation; And, as each Member of the former is privileged and concluded, as a Citizen; ſo is each Citizen, as a Subject of the State, concluded in Matters eſſential to the Conſtitution of that General Society, into which the Reſt are at laſt all reſolved.

Thirdly, The Paſſage we are upon, may ſerve to inſtruct us, what thoſe Eſſential Matters are, which make the Band of Unity in the Chriſtian Church.

Of theſe the *Firſt*, is An Acknowledgment of, and Belief in, Jeſus Chriſt. It is *in Him*, that we are built up

into this Holy Temple; *in Him*, that we are framed and grow up; *in Him*, that we are made Partakers of the Spirit, which is the common Cement of this Building, and conſtitutes it One, by an Union more cloſe and ſtrict, than any Images taken from ſenſible Objects can fully repreſent. Nothing can come near it, but that which was the cauſe of it; Even the Union of our Humane to his own Divine Nature, deſigned to bring us nearer to Him, as God; than We, if he had not vouchſafed to become Man, could have poſſibly been. And thus the Church is united in the chief Corner Stone, their *One Lord*.

The *Second* Tie, or Band of Union, mentioned here, is the Doctrine of the *Apoſtles* and *Prophets* concerning him. This in effect is what we find in Scripture ſtyled, *The form of ſound Words*, *The form of Doctrine to which* Proſelytes at their Converſion *were delivered*, *The Faith once delivered to the Saints*, and That, which, as an ancient Father expreſſes it, *the Church, having received from the Apoſtles and their Diſciples, tho' diſperſed far and wide, does yet preſerve; as tho' all were contained in one Houſe, and embrace alike, as tho' all had but one heart and one ſoul.* Leſs than this will not make us Chriſtians; More than this ought not to be required. And therefore, whereſoever the Apoſtles Doctrine is preſerv'd and maintain'd, there is the Unity of the *Foundation*, that of *One Faith*.

2 Tim. i. 13. Rom. vi. 17. Jude 3.

Iren. L. i. C. 2, 3.

3. There is yet a *Third* Ligament, taken notice of here, the *One Spirit*: Of which our Lord himſelf hath told us, that of *It* and *Water we are born again*, by a Birth neceſſary to our entring into the Kingdom of God: And this Apoſtle, that by *It we are all been made into one Body*, that we *have all been made to drink into it*, that we are *adopted*, *quickned*, *ſanctified*, *ſealed*, and *joined to the Lord by it*, and that They, *who have it not*, *are none of Chriſt's*. This, even

John iii. 5. 1. Cor. xii. 13. Rom. viii. 11, 15. 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. Epheſ. iv. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. viii. 9.

even when ſhed forth in extraordinary and miraculous Powers, was ſo far from ſuperſeding, as only to evidence the Fitneſs of the Perſons, and to be eſteem'd a Qualification for that Sacrament which Chriſt hath inſtituted, as a Federal Rite of Admiſſion into his Church. And this, being conveyed in and by the Sacraments, in the ordinary Diſtributions of his Grace, doth eſtabliſh the Neceſſity of that other Inſtance of Unity meant by St. *Paul*, when in the *Fourth* of this Epiſtle, to *One Lord*, and *One Faith*, he adds *One Baptiſm*. For Men may be Believers, but Chriſtians or Members of the Church they are not, till that Rite have paſſed upon them; by which the Head of this Body commanded all Nations to be *diſcipled*, and made his covenanted People.

Acts x. 47. --xi. 15, 16, 17.

Matt. xxviii. 19.

Theſe Three ſeem to be eſſential, and abſolutely needful, to the Conſtitution of a Chriſtian Church. They are Marks, by which thoſe who are Members of it, may be plainly diſcerned from them who are not ſo: And, for that reaſon, the Company who have them, are named the Viſible Church. Many other things are requiſite to the Well-being, the Purity, and the Perfection of the Church. But ſtill, grievous Errors in Opinion, Enormous Wickedneſs in Practice, Horrible Corruptions in Worſhip, Shameful Remiſſineſs in Diſcipline, or Irregularities in Government, notwithſtanding; They, who hold to the Foundation, and have the Seal of the Covenant, be they ſingle Perſons, or be they Societies, muſt not be denied to be Members, though unſound, and maimed, impure and even ſcandalous Members of the One Catholick Church, as That ſignifies the Viſible Church of Chriſt.

But alas! To ſuch as theſe, that Memberſhip is a poor Privilege. For it comports with thoſe Circumſtances of the Church only, which render a *Vine*, a *Net caſt into the Sea*, a Common *Field*, and a *Threſhing floor*,

floor, proper Compariſons to repreſent her. Charity indeed will always think the beſt; and we muſt wiſh and hope for the Internal Efficacy, where there are the Outward Means, of Grace. But what will it profit to hang upon the *Vine*, an unfruitful Branch, whoſe end is to be caſt away, and withered and burned? Or to be found in *the Net*, when at the ſame time that the good are *gathered into Veſſels*, *the Bad are ſure to be thrown away?* Or how are the Tares the better for ſtanding with the Wheat, or the Chaff for lying among the Corn at preſent; when a Day of Diſtinction is coming; and One, who cannot be deceived with Forms and falſe Appearances, ſhall ſeparate the one from the other; gather the Grain into his Garner, and burn the Refuſe with Fire unquenchable? Let us not therefore ſuppoſe, that Theſe, though in Profeſſion Members of Chriſt's Viſible, are yet in Truth Members of his Myſtical, Body. For I think it plain,

John xv. 6,

Matt. xiii. 47----50. Matt. xiii. 37----42. ---iii. 12.

Fourthly, That the Church, intended here by St. *Paul*, is vaſtly different from that laſt ſpoken of: and that it is, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, the City and Dwelling of God. It is That, which hath Fellowſhip and a Denizen-Right with the Saints; Such as none but truly good Men can have. For of all others, be their Perſuaſion what it will, it is declared, they ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of God. It is that Church, which are the Houſhold of God; But ſuch are only thoſe Servants, who *Cleanſe themſelves from all Filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in His Fear*, and thoſe Sons, who are *followers of Him, as dear Children.* It is that Church, which is built up in *Jeſus*, and grows into a Temple; But ſo do only They, whoſe Superſtructure is anſwerable to their Foundation,

Ver. 19.

1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

Ver. 19.

2. Cor. vii. 1.

Eph. v. 1.

tion, a Chriſtian Life erected upon a Chriſtian Faith. It is that Church, wherein God dwells by his Spirit; But ſuch are only They, who reverence the Deity within them, keep themſelves undefiled Members of Chriſt's Body, reckon their Perſons no longer their own; but make it their whole Buſineſs, by all their Actions, Words, and Thoughts, to glorify Him, to whom they are dedicated. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

This is the Church, of which ſuch glorious Characters are given, to whom ſuch precious Promiſes are made: The Spouſe of Chriſt, all glorious within, *without wrinkle and without ſpot:* The noble Aſſembly of the Firſt-born in Heaven, and the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect, from the beginning of the World to the End. Eph. v. 27. Hebr. xii. 23.

And yet the Word *Church* is generally meant of that Viſible Body, and with very good reaſon: Becauſe of this Body Myſtical (and to all but God inviſible) the Means of Salvation adminiſtred in the Viſible Body are deſigned to make us truly Members. To It, by Them alone, we can be ordinarily brought; In It, by a right Uſe of them, we ſhall at laſt certainly be found; And therefore we can never be ſufficiently thankful, for the precious Opportunities we enjoy, in the Word, the Sacraments, the Purity of Both: (in this beſt reformed Church eſpecially:) Never ſufficiently fearful of increaſing our own Condemnation, by the Neglect or Abuſe of our Religious Advantages: Never too diligent to poſſeſs our *Veſſels in ſanctification and honour*, that thoſe Bodies be not deſecrated by ſenſual and vile Luſts, which God hath choſen to inhabit by the Spirit of Holineſs. In a word, We can never be too importunate, in the Prayer made this Day, by our Wiſe and Holy Mother, that our *Faith in the Sight of God may never be reproved.* Which it will as effectually be, by a Converſation vicious and unworthy of it, as by any Doubt or Error 1 Theſſ. iv. 4.

Error deſtructive of it. From all which God in his Mercy deliver us, and keep us for ever truly and ſavingly united to his Dear Son; To whom (our Head) with the Father, and Bleſſed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, henceforth for evermore. *Amen.*

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

St. John xx. 24.

24. *Thomas*, one of the Apoſtles, happened to be abſent at that time.

24. *THomas one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jeſus came.*

25. This Man was ſo far from believing the report of his Brethren; as to declare, he would never be perſuaded, that it was Jeſus, without the utmoſt Evidence, that all his Senſes, capable of judging in ſuch a Matter, could receive.

25 *The other Diſciples therefore ſaid unto him, we have ſeen the Lord. But he ſaid unto them, Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe.*

26, 27. This Evidence Jeſus vouchſafed to give him: For, the next Lord's Day, (or firſt of the following Week) he came to them again as before, *Ver.* 19. (See the Comment on Goſp. i. Sund. after *Eaſter*) and after the uſual Salutation ſaid to *Thomas*----

26. *And after eight days again his Diſciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid, Peace be unto you.*

27. *Then ſaith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thruſt it into my ſide: and be not faithleſs, but believing.*

28. He being thus accoſted in his own words, and ſenſibly convinc'd; acknowledged, that a Perſon, able thus thus to know his Words and Thoughts and to raiſe himſelf from the dead, muſt needs be his very Maſter Jeſus, and very God.

28. *And Thomas anſwered and ſaid unto him, My Lord and my God.*

29. To which our Lord replied to this effect. How ſmall Commendation is due to this Faith of thine, which yielded to that Sight and Feeling, which leave no room for Doubt, to any Senſes; in compariſon of Theirs, who ſhall aſſent to Truths, in reaſon credible, though ſuch as neither are, nor can be, in this manner demonſtrated to them?

29. *Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

30. *And many other ſigns truly did Jeſus in the preſence of his diſciples, which are not written in this book.*

31. *But theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the ſon of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*

though theſe that are told, be in Number far ſhort really wrought.

30, 31. And this Belief, (*viz.* of *Jeſus* being the *Meſſiah*, and only begotten Son of God) the Miracles related in this Goſpel will be (it is hoped (ſufficient to produce; of thoſe, which Jeſus had

COMMENT.

IN the Scripture now before us, there are Three Things eſpecially, which require our Conſideration.

I. The *Firſt* is, *Thomas* his Unbelief.

II. The *Second*, the Means made uſe of for removing it.

III. The *Third*, The Efficacy and Succeſs of thoſe Means. To Theſe I ſhall ſpeak particularly; and will endeavour to render them as uſeful as I can, by drawing proper Reflections and Inferences from each of them, as it ſhall come in order before me.

1. I begin with *Thomas* his Unbelief. By which hard Term far be it from Me to inſinuate, that this Apoſtle's Diſſatisfaction proceeded from affected or hardened Infidelity. Had the caſe ſtood thus, God would moſt probably have forſaken him in it. The Scriptures no where (that I know of) furniſh an Example of particular and extraordinary Meaſures, afforded for the Conviction of ſuch Men, as had wilfully and reſolutely ſet themſelves againſt the Truth. But the gentleſt thing we can ſay of the Inſtance now in hand, is, that it diſcovered Weakneſs to a very high degree, and a Hardneſs to be perſuaded, which (in an Apoſtle eſpecially) muſt needs deſerve great Blame.

A Reſurrection from the Dead, 'tis confeſs'd, was new and ſtrange: An Event, which the generality of Mankind held altogether incredible. But, in the Caſe

of

of *Jeſus*, and the Circumſtances of *Thomas*, the Diſbelief of it ſeems incapable of Excuſe. The ancient Prophecies concerning the Meſſias had ſpoken ſo fully to this Point, *That thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer*, and to *riſe from the Dead the third Day*; that our Lord, in his Converſation with the two Travellers to *Emmaus*, charges them with *Folly* and *Slowneſs of Heart*, for not being convinced upon this Teſtimony alone. He had frequently, during his abode upon Earth, given the Apoſtles warning of it. He had told the Jews, that, whenever they ſhould *deſtroy the Temple of his Body, in the Compaſs of Three Days he would ſet it up again.* He never mentioned the Sufferings, appointed for him to accompliſh at *Jeruſalem*, without remembring to cloſe that melancholy Subject, with the comfortable Promiſe of returning to Life again. That thus he ought, and thus he intended to do, no doubt could remain. And, that this Promiſe, Great and Surprizing though it were, was yet poſſible to Him, *Thomas* might well be ſatisfied. He might be ſo, from the other Miracles, which he ſaw daily wrought by him; By the reviving of *Jairus*'s Daughter; which he could not but know: But eſpecially from the raiſing of *Lazarus*, of which himſelf was an Eye-witneſs. And indeed that Wonder ſeems to have been reſerved to the Concluſion of our Saviour's Life; that it might both crown all that went before, and by, being freſh in the Memories of Men, ſmooth the way for the Belief of his own Reſurrection, which came to paſs within the ſpace of very few Days after.

Luke xxiv. 46, 25.

John ii. 19, 21.

Matt. xvi. 21.
——xvii. 23.
——xx. 19.

Matt. ix. 25, 26.
Luke viii.

John xi.

What more now could be expected in reaſon, but competent Evidence, that a thing ſo often promiſed, ſo clearly foretold, A thing, of which *Jeſus* had proved himſelf ſo capable

capable was actually performed? And was This wanting? Had he not the Teſtimony of the *Women at the Sepulchre, who ſaw the Viſion of Angels? Had he* not *Mary Magdalene*, who ſaw our Lord himſelf? Had he not the Two Travellers, who heard him diſcourſe, and ſaw him break Bread? Nay, had he not the unanimous Aſſertions of his *ten Brethren*, recounting to him all the Paſſages of our Saviour's Appearance to Them? (For ſo no doubt they did at large, though it was not neceſſary for *St. John*'s purpoſe here to ſay more, than that they told him, *They had ſeen the Lord.*) Were Theſe Perſons likely, were they under any Temptation, to deceive him? And was it not altogether as extravagant an Imagination, to ſuppoſe they could be deceived themſelves? Was not their long and intimate Acquaintance with *Jeſus* ſufficient to diſtinguiſh His, from any other Perſon? And was there not abundant care taken to ſatisfy them, that this was no airy Form in his Shape, by having his *Hands and his Feet*, his *Fleſh and Bones* handled; by Eating with them, and Talking to them? Did not his very Diſcourſe ſpeak him what he was? The calling his own former Sayings to remembrance, The opening their Underſtandings, The Expounding and Arguing out of Scripture; Did they not all ſavour of that peculiar Authority, with which he always taught? And the *Breathing* upon them, giving them the Holy Ghoſt, and Commiſſion to preach and act in his Name, and his Father's, were Characters as plain, that this Perſon was their own Maſter, the very Chriſt of God.

Luke xxiv. 9. John xx. 18. Luke xxiv. 33.

John xx. 25.

Luke xxiv. 39, 40.

John xx. 22.

Theſe were ſuch Argurments, as the generality of Believers in after-ages have reſted upon; Whom our Saviour pronounces *Bleſſed*, for not refuſing their aſſent to That, which they did not, could not ſee. And therefore, when *Thomas* inſiſted

Ver. 29.

ſiſted upon ſenſible Demonſtration; it is no wrong done to the Virtues of that Apoſtle, to call this Unbelief; But Juſtice requires, that we ſhould both condemn Him, and admire his Maſter. That Maſter, Who, when he indulged his Weakneſs ſo far, as to Satisfy his groſſeſt Senſes; did not do this, becauſe the former Evidences of himſelf had been inſufficient, or to warrant the rejection of them in Others; but out of infinite Goodneſs, and particular Condeſcenſion to the preſent Stupidity of this unperſuaded Man; And for other excellent Reaſons, of which I ſhall have occaſion to ſay ſomething more by and by.

In the mean while, I would be glad to improve this *Firſt* Particular, by deſiring, that what hath been ſaid upon it may be fixed upon Mens Minds, with theſe Reflections.

1. *Firſt*, That Men would obſerve the immediate Occaſion of St. *Thomas* his falling into this Unbelief; Which was his Abſence from the reſt of the Apoſtles, when Chriſt appeared to them. It ſeems moſt likely, that thoſe Aſſemblies, held ſecretly for fear of the Jews, were always employed to Religious purpoſes. And, from the Advantage, which *Thomas* loſt by not being there; We may and ought to take Warning, againſt the neglect of God's publick Worſhip. It is in his own Houſe, and in the Congregations of the Faithful, that Chriſt exhibits himſelf. There we are to expect the Enlightening of our Minds, the Purifying our Actions, the Convictions of his Truth, the Aſſiſtance of his Grace; for the giving us a right underſtanding of our Duty, and for the diſpoſing us to practiſe it, when we do underſtand it. Theſe are the means of growing in Goodneſs, which God hath ordained; and it is uſual and juſt with Him, to ſuffer Their Virtues to fade, and wither, and periſh, who will not come hither for Strength and Refreſhment. How many have been loſt, for not ſeeking God where he may be found? What numbers of Souls lie

now

now tormented in Hell, whoſe firſt ſtep towards ruin was, their not frequenting the Church, ſlighting the Prayers, and Sermons, and Sacraments, and other mighty Helps and Comforts, which might have been had in this place? Had *Thomas* been with his Brethren, he probably had been ſatisfied, as ſoon, and as eaſily as They. Oh let this then prevail with Men, to be conſtant Comers to the Houſe of God; leſt They, like Him, fall into Unbelief; and, by a wilful neglect of ordinary Means, loſe all Pretenſions to their own Happineſs. When Sloth, or Contempt, or a Light Indiſpoſition, or a Pretence of Buſineſs, tempts you to be abſent; Think with yourſelf, It may be, God this Day may, by his Miniſter, tell me ſome neceſſary thing which I knew not before: It may be, he may drive ſome powerful Exhortation home upon my Conſcience, which may make me a better Man ever after; It may be ſome lurking Sin may be diſcovered, or ſome domineering Luſt ſubdued, by the Advices prepared for me at this very time: It may be, my Zeal, my Devotion, my Charity, may be inflamed, by joining in Prayer with my Fellow-Chriſtians. But why do I ſay, it may be? For ſome of theſe certainly will be. God hath commanded his Bleſſing to wait at his own Houſe; And no Man ever came hither as he ought, but he went back better than he came. No Man ever prayed, or heard, in publick, with a true Chriſtian Temper of Soul, who prayed or heard in vain. But either his own, or ſome other's, Condition was the ſafer and better for it. This is the only place, that ſends no good Man empty away. And they, who die for want of Spiritual Food, are only ſuch as have no Appetite, and take no pains to be fed. On the other hand, Can it be thought ſtrange, that God ſhould ſuffer ſuch to periſh for hunger, as obſtinately and wilfully ſtarve themſelves? Why may we not expect, that thoſe who deſpiſe Him, He will deſpiſe? And accordingly we ſee

that

that the beginning of Profaneneſs and ſhameleſs Vice commonly centers here. Men firſt neglect, then are aſhamed and afraid, to come hither, for the awakening their Conſciences; and ſo by degrees they fall into deſperate Hardneſs of Heart. The Reaſons and the Truth whereof I might lay before you paſt all diſpute. But at preſent I ſhall only refer you to this one Argument; That, of all the vile Wretches, whom Murther, or Robbery, or other ſcandalous Crimes, bring to a publick and a ſhameful Death; There are ſcarce Any, who die with any Senſe and Confeſſion of their Sins, but acknowledge, that abſenting themſelves from the publick Worſhip was the curſed beginning of all their profligate Converſation. Such Teſtimony does every Gaol, and every Gibbet, bear to that method of God's dealing with Mankind, *That when People will not hear his Voice, nor endure his Reproofs, he gives them up to their own Hearts Luſts, and lets them follow their own Imaginations. But God will love Them that love Him, and they that ſeek him early*, (that is, diligently and conſtantly) *ſhall be ſure to find him.*

Pſal. lxxxi. 13.

Prov. viii. 17.

2. *Secondly*, From the Inſtance before us I would briefly take notice, what Benefits and Uſes are to be made of the Faults and Failings of eminent Perſons, recorded in Scripture. When theſe Apoſtles do ſo freely and fully tranſmit to all future Ages ſuch Blots, as the Denial of St. *Peter*, the Unbelief of St. *Thomas*, the Fears, and Cowardice, and Heavineſs, of all their Brethren; This may ſatisfy us, that they were Men of Integrity; That it was not their Study to magnify themſelves, or to impoſe upon the World, or promote any thing but the very Truth. For a private Deſign would have tempted them to diſguiſe, and excuſe, and conceal, any Blemiſhes in their own Characters. And therefore this Frankneſs is a great Motive to our Belief of their Writings; ſince Them, who would not diſſemble, when their

their own Credit lay at ſtake, we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe falſe in other Matters.

Again, Theſe Spots in the very Saints themſelves teach Us, that no mere Man whatſoever is in all points ſo perfect, that we ſhould reſt upon his Example, or blindly make His Behaviour the Rule of our Own: That the Law of God is the only true Standard of our Actions: And that even the beſt of Men, when weighed in this Balance, have been found wanting. Conſequently, That this Conſideration ſhould make us humble and meek; Eſpecially, ſince moſt of Us have have ſo unequal a mixture, ſo many more and greater Vices, for an Allay and Embaſement to our ſo many leſs and fewer Virtues. It is an Argument of great Vanity, for any Man to ſay, he would not have fallen with *David*, or have forſworn Chriſt with St. *Peter*, or the like: Alas! we are but little acquainted with Their Circumſtances, the Violence of their Temptations, or the Infirmities of Humane Nature in general: And leaſt of all, with our Own; Who perhaps fall, if not ſo deep, or ſo notoriouſly, yet more frequently, and upon leſs Provocations to Sin; And whoſe Sins, though they be more, yet our Relentings for them are ſlighter, and our Repentance infinitely leſs exemplary, than Theirs.

And therefore (*Laſtly*) This ſhould inſpire great Tenderdneſs and Caution, how we preſume to cenſure and judge Others. But above all, it ſhould hinder our taking upon us to determine any thing concerning their ſpiritual and future State, upon the account of any very ill Action, which appears to Us, or which in reality hath been done by them. For, if Prophets, if Apoſtles, if other ſhining Lights, who are now ſo many *Suns in the Kingdom of Heaven*, have had theſe Misfortunes; and yet, by the Grace of God, and their own better Conſideration, have recovered their Station, and come forth, like the Morning Light, with double Luſtre, after Darkneſs and Error: Who are We, that We ſhould ſet Bounds to the Grace of God, or deſpair

even of the worſt of our Brethren? He can raiſe them that have been long *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, to a Life of Righteouſneſs and Immortal Hope. And our Duty is, to wiſh and pray that he would do ſo; and to contribute ourſelves the utmoſt in our Power, towards the furthering and preparing Sinners for the Workings of Divine Grace. Now This is beſt to be done, by methods of Meekneſs, and Kindneſs, and Long-ſuffering; by winning them over to a better Senſe, and patiently contending with them for their Good. Whatever Severity and Rigour is neceſſary in theſe Caſes, That is the Buſineſs of Authority, and a Publick Act. But all, that private Chriſtians have to do, is to love, and to admoniſh; to perſuade, and to treat bad Men courteouſly; to watch favourable Opportunities of doing them ſervice; and not preſently to give over, if they perceive no Improvement; to allow time for cool and ſober Thoughts; and to accommodate, as much as may be, our Selves, and our Arguments, to the Diſpoſition of the Perſons with whom we are to deal. All theſe things, as they naturally offer themſelves, upon the Contemplation of good Mens Failings in general; ſo do they more particularly, from the Pattern now before us. For here we find the Apoſtles eager in informing their abſent Brother of the Lord's Reſurrection, And yet patient towards him, tho' their Teſtimony was deſpiſed. Nay, notwithſtanding this obſtinate diſſent from them in ſo material a point, and the Reflection this diſſent might caſt upon their Wiſdom, or their Integrity, as if they had been falſe, or credulous and eaſy to a Fault; Yet He was ſuffer'd to continue, and was found, in their Friendſhip and their Company, at our Saviour's next Viſit: Which was indeed a Viſit of Compaſſion to this poſitive miſtaken Man. And the mention of that brings me to my *Second* Head.

II. The Means uſed for convincing *Thomas*, and removing his Unbelief. Now Theſe were the very ſame

which

which himſelf had deſired. For, though our Lord expreſs it by *Behold my Hands*; yet *Seeing* and *Beholding* are often uſed with regard to perfect and diſtinct Perception by the Mediation of which ſoever of our Senſes that Knowledge is conveyed to us. There ſeems therefore little doubt to be made, but *Thomas* uſed all thoſe Methods for his own Conviction, which our Lord intended to afford: That he contented not himſelf with the View only of Chriſt's crucified Body, the Marks and Scars of the Wounds received upon the Croſs; But that he Handled and Searched them, and employed all the Evidence of his ſeveral Senſes. This was fit, if not to remove all Remains of Unbelief and Doubting, yet in Obedience to his Maſter; who had taken him at his word, and determined thus to convince all, who ſhould hereafter diſpute the reality of his Reſurrection, that That was not capable of any ſort of Proof, which had not been already given of it. For how could the moſt cavilling Infidel expect or ask more, than to ſee and handle the Body of *Jeſus*; to be aſſured, not only that it was a true Body, but that it was the very ſame, and could be no other Body, than That, which had been wounded, and expired upon the Croſs? This is all, that could poſſibly be required for the Proof of our Saviour's Riſing from the Dead. And this is ſuch a proof, as muſt in reaſon be ſuppoſed to take away the very Jealouſy of Deluſion and Deceit. Since then the Means of removing *Thomas* his Unbelief were ſo very proper, and ſo fully anſwered their purpoſe; Nothing more is neceſſary upon this Head, than only to leave it with a Reflection or two; which naturally offer themſelves, and are fit to be attended to upon this Occaſion.

Now *Firſt*, We may aſſure ourſelves from this Paſſage, that, whatſoever Changes our Saviour's Glorified Body might undergo after his Reſurrection, yet it was not altered as to the Properties of a Body; but ſtill ſuch, as the Senſes of Men were competent Judges of. To theſe

Senſes it is, that our Lord appeals: By Theſe he compoſes the terrified Diſciples, who feared a Phantom; By Theſe he ſatisfies the Doubtful and Incredulous; By Theſe the Apoſtles make it their Buſineſs to perſuade the World: Affirming, that they had *eaten and drunken with him*, had *ſeen* and *heard* him, and that they went upon ſure Grounds, having ſeveral ſuch Demonſtrations, as they could not poſſibly be deceived in. But now, if the Body of our Saviour be not ſubject to the ſame Laws with all other Corporeal Subſtances; If it may be, where our Senſes can diſcern nothing of it, though no other Body can be ſo; Then, what Satisfaction had *Thomas* by this Indulgence of our Lord? Why ſhould he lay aſide his Scruples, for the ſeeing and touching that Body, which our Senſes may be, and are very often, deceived in? How poor an Argument was that of St. *John*, that he declared to his Proſelyte, *That which he had ſeen and heard, and his Hands had handled of the Word of Life*; if neither Eyes, nor Ears, nor Hands, are to be truſted in their Judgment of this matter, nor can, with any Safety or Piety, be depended upon?

Acts x. 41.

1 John i. 1.

2. But *Secondly*, Let us, upon this occaſion, obſerve and admire the marvellous Love and Condeſcenſion of our Bleſſed Saviour, who ſtoop'd to the Infirmities of one doubting Diſciple, and would not give him over to his Unbelief, though that Unbelief were moſt unreaſonable. He had (as I have taken notice before) convinced the reſt of the Apoſtles ſufficiently; and Their Teſtimony ought to have convinced *Thomas*, as His afterwards did them, who believed through his Preaching. The demanding to have one's Senſes ſatisfied, in every Article of Faith, is a thing moſt unreaſonable. None but They, who lived whilſt Chriſt was in the Fleſh, and, of Them again, None but thoſe few, who had opportunities of ſeeing and converſing with him, were capable of ſuch Methods. And, how very inconſiderable

ſiderable a Number are Theſe, in compariſon of the Multitudes, which muſt needs want them? Upon ſuch Terms, the Chriſtian Religion could have been but of one Age's continuance at moſt; And, even in that Age, it muſt be very far from being entertain'd by the Generality of Mankind. So that there was reaſon enough, to have denied *Thomas* the ſatisfaction he inſiſted upon. But yet we ſee this good Shepherd ſought and found his loſt and wandering Sheep; and, by ſo doing, he hath aſſured Us, it is not his Will, that any of his little ones ſhould periſh. The State of Glory and Immortality, upon which Chriſt is now enter'd, though very different from that humble Guiſe of Fleſh and Blood, in which He dwelt among Men, hath yet made no difference in Him. His Diſpoſitions are the ſame, his Mercy and tender Affection the ſame, the Yearnings of his Bowels over wretched Mortals the ſame, and his Compaſſion for their Weakneſſes and Sufferings the ſame, in the midſt of Majeſty and Bliſs unconceivable; as when himſelf felt and endured the Frailities, and Poverty, and other Afflictions, of humane Nature. So juſtly may we all apply to ourſelves that Comfort of St. *Paul*, *We have not a High Prieſt that cannot be touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities, and may therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace for the obtaining Mercy.* Hebr. iv. 15, 16. His Height and Greatneſs does not render him diſdainful and difficult of Acceſs: The diſtance of his Dwelling ſets him not far off, that we ſhould not be able to reach him with our Prayers. But he is ſtill the ſame loving *Jeſus*, hath ſtill a tender concern for poor Sinners and weak Chriſtians: And therefore approach him, All ye humble and contrite Ones, with Reverence, and a Holy Hope. For he will enlighten your Underſtandings, and give liberally that Knowledge, which is neceſſary for your Salvation: He will ſtrengthen your feeble Knees, reſtore your lame and withered Hands, and enable the

Willing to do his Work, and to walk in his Way. He will not break the bruiſed Reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax; but comfort the broken-hearted, and encourage the Beginnings and imperfect Eſſays of Goodneſs. In a Word, To all them that err, or are hindered, out of Infirmity, and not out of Perverſeneſs, he will be a mighty and a merciful Saviour. Like this Apoſtle in my Text they ſhall be pity'd, and cheriſh'd, and ſettled in the Truth, and *find Grace to help in time of need.* But

Hebr. iv. 16.

3. *Thirdly*, We muſt take care to underſtand this Favour to *Thomas* aright, ſo as not to be led into falſe Expectations from it. For, though every Chriſtian may, upon this Example, build a ſound Hope of all neceſſary Grace, and of the good Intentions of our kind Saviour to all his weak and wandering ones: Yet there is no Foundation at all in it, for Their depending upon ſome ſenſible Demonſtration, or Miraculous Methods of Conviction, who pretend to be diſſatisfied in the Faith, at this time of Day. The Reaſon is, Becauſe Theſe Evidences are not, nor can be, needful now; And conſequently, they come not within the compaſs of Neceſſary Grace. I have ſhewn indeed, that the Satisfaction *Thomas* was allowed, was not ſtrictly Neceſſary; becauſe he might, and ought to have been ſatisfied without it: And more is not neceſſary, than is ſufficient. But if our Lord, in particular Condeſcenſion and Indulgence to the Infirmities of One Diſciple, be better than his Word, and afford an extraordinary Favour; this gives no Right, no Claim, to the Reſt. They can only be ſure of ſtated and Ordinary means, and have all the reaſon in the World to be contented with thoſe means.

Beſides, There can never be the ſame Motives, the ſame Occaſion, to incline God's Mercy for any particular Perſon, who lives under the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel now; as there was for this Manifeſtation to *Thomas*. It might

might indeed be urged before, that our Lord had not yet given all the Proofs of his Reſurrection, that the thing was capable of. But, When here every Senſe was appealed to, and all concurred in their Verdict; When nothing was left unask'd, that the moſt Sceptical Doubter could pretend to deſire: When the very Apoſtles themſelves had one of their number, that held out a while; and they preached not this Doctrine, till His Scruples were removed: When even this Doubter himſelf was no leſs vigorous and poſitive afterwards, in aſſerting the Truth of a Point, which nothing but Demonſtration could make him believe: This takes off all Imputation of Credulity and Eaſineſs; This ſhews, that, as theſe Diſciples could have no Temptations to deceive others, ſo they went upon ſure Grounds, by taking all poſſible care that they might not be, and they durſt be confident that they were not, could not be, deceived themſelves. All which, as it might well juſtify the Church, in ſaying, *that God in his Wiſdom ſuffered Thomas to doubt for the more Confirmation of the Faith*; (Chriſtian Religion gaining ſome Advantages by theſe Doubts, which we do not ſee, how it could have had without them) ſo it certainly renders the Doubts of Others, much more inexcuſable. For, Whatever Objections can be now pretended, they have been anſwered and baffled already. If ever Demonſtration was neceſſary, it was neceſſary but once. This Diſciple doubted, and was ſatisfied for us all; and his former Unbelief adds ſuch ſtrength to the Cauſe he pleads, and makes him a Witneſs ſo much above Exception; that the Scruples, which in Him were Weakneſs, in Thoſe that follow him, and know his Story, will be Wilfulneſs and reſolved Infidelity. Conſequently, No other Man's Circumſtances admitting of the ſame Alleviations, which thoſe of *Thomas* did; No other Man can be equally an Object of Compaſſion for his Unbelief, or can reaſonably hope, that God will condeſcend to

Collect for the Day.

uſe the like extraordinary Methods, to convert and perſuade him to the Truth.

Thus what in *Thomas* might appear to be want of Evidence, will be found in Modern Unbelievers to be want of good Diſpoſition. And how great a hand the Mind and Will of a Man have, in his believing or rejecting the Truth, our Bleſſed Lord has given us an occaſion to conſider, in thoſe Words to St. *Thomas*, *Be not faithleſs, but believing.* *Ver.* 27. It ſeems by this, that the very Sight and Feeling of Chriſt's Body, the particular proving thoſe Wounds received upon the Croſs, the Finger in the Print of the Nails, and the Hand in the Side which the Spear had pierced, had not ſuperſeded all Occaſions for this Advice. Nor is this the only Intimation given us in Scripture, that Evidence of Senſe itſelf will not always convince; but that, after the utmoſt Proof has been made, that any, even the moſt Sceptical Man can wiſh, it is not impoſſible, for a corrupt and perverſe Mind, not to believe even yet. Of ſuch Perverſeneſs the Apoſtle of this Day was manifeſtly innocent: For, no ſooner were the Difficulties he had formed to himſelf, concerning a true and proper Reſurrection, ſatisfied according to his Deſire; but he ſurrendered immediately. And though ſlower in aſſenting to it, yet was he more lofty and noble in the manner of acknowledging it, than any of his Brethren. Which leads me to the

III. *Third*, and Laſt Head. The Succeſs of the means uſed by our Lord, for removing *Thomas* his Unbelief, expreſſed in the 28th Verſe, And *Thomas anſwered and ſaid, My Lord, and my God.* I call this the nobleſt Confeſſion; becauſe the Catholick Interpreters of Scripture have underſtood by it, that St. *Thomas* did not only recognize *Jeſus* for the *Meſſiah*, the very ſame Lord, to whom he had been a Servant and Companion during the Space of his Miniſtry; but that he more-

over

over owned his Divine Nature, and drew the Consequence to himself, which St. *Paul* did afterwards to the *Romans*, *That the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead, and the power he exerted in it, did* abundantly *declare him to be the very Son of God.* Rom. i. 4. Accordingly, the Original here is in Terms so strict, and with such an Addition of the *Greek* Article, as the very Hereticks and Enemies of the Truth confess to be a Character of the Word *God* being taken in its proper and natural Sense, and intended of the *Only True God.* And indeed, when they go about to make these words a Note of Admiration only, they do not leave them a sufficient force for expressing *Thomas* his Conviction. For Expressions of Wonder, though they properly speak Astonishment and Surprize, yet they do not always imply Belief; and may therefore import the Strangeness, without inferring the Truth, of the Thing. But our Lord (you see in the next words) accepts This, as a full and sufficient Declaration of Assent: *Thomas, Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed.* And to make it thus, we must allow that Paraphrase, which some ancient Translations supply it with, by reading, *Thou art my Lord, Thou art my God*: Which is but in effect to say, what our Saviour had before pronounced concerning himself; That the Truth of those Declarations was now apparent, *Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up. No man taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* John ii. 19. —— x. 18. Now no mere Man can do these things; None but God can have that power. So mighty, so sudden a Change do we find in this Apostle; that the Person, whom so lately he could not be prevailed upon to think otherwise of, than as a dead Man; lost to all Hopes, all Possibility of returning; he now adores and admires, as the Almighty and the Everliving God.

From

From hence let every Diſciple of Jeſus learn, with all becoming Reverence to contemplate this Reſurrection of our Lord, and to adore the Glories and the Wonders of Him and It. Let us take all poſſible care, to confirm ourſelves in the aſſured Belief of this, and of all other Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith. Let us obſerve, and be thankful for, the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of our God and Saviour, who converted the Failings of an Eminent Servant, to ſuch excellent Advantage; that not only his own Mind, like a broken Bone well ſet, was better eſtabliſhed from his own Doubts; but that Gainſayers ſhould be more effectually put to ſilence by them, and out of His Weakneſs all ſucceeding Believers ſhould be made ſtrong. Let Us again, with St. *Thomas*, be ready to lay aſide our Scruples upon ſufficient Conviction; and zealous to make ſome amends by our After-acts, for any Offence, which thoſe Scruples might have given, while we entertain'd them. Above all let us beg the Grace and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit of God, to keep us always in that ſincere, teachable, meek Diſpoſition of Soul: And likewiſe in that due Regard and Obſervance of all Virtues and good Works, agreeable to the Principles we profeſs, *that our Faith in his ſight may never be reproved.* But that, from a perfect and active Belief in his Son Jeſus Chriſt here, we may be at length received to the Sight and raviſhing Enjoyment of him; and be, and live, and reign, with our Dear Lord for ever in the Heavens. Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, for the ſame Jeſus Chriſt's ſake. To whom, *&c. Amen.*

The

The Converſion of St. PAUL.

An Account of St. PAUL.

ST. *Paul* (as himſelf informs us) was of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and a Citizen of *Tarſus* in *Cilicia*. A Place, which, for healthful Situation, good Building, and to omit other its Excellences, the Fame of its Univerſity, might with good reaſon claim the Title, which her Denizen gives her, that of *no mean City* We have not any account of St. *Paul*'s Relations; St. *Jerom* makes them to have been Inhabitants of *Giſcala* in *Judea*, and to remove to *Tarſus* after the Birth of this Son. Wherein he differs, not only from other Interpreters; but even from St. *Paul*'s own Account of himſelf, who declares, that he was born at *Tarſus:* And St. *Jerom* indeed elſewhere mentions that other, as a Report not to be depended upon. In that City he was trained up, and had the uſual Accompliſhments of an Univerſity, the Knowledge of Philoſophy, and other Liberal Sciences. His Father, being a Phariſee, took care, that he might, upon this Foundation. proceed to the building a fair Superſtructure of Divine Learning, and the Knowledge of the *Moſaick* Rites and Ceremonies. Which the better to effect, he was ſent to *Jeruſalem*, and became a Scholar of *Gamaliel*; a Perſon celebrated for Wiſdom and Authority, above moſt of the then Members of his Sect.

Phil. iii. 5. Acts xxi. 39.

Catal. De Scrip. Eccl.

Acts xxii. 3.

Com. in Philem. 23. *on theſe Words,* Epaphras *my fellow Priſoner.*

Acts xxii. 3.

Of theſe Phariſees, and their Zeal, ſome Account hath been formerly given. What Influence this Education had on St. *Paul*,

Goſp. xi. *Sund. aft. Trin.*

the

the following Diſcourſes on this Day will ſhew. To which my Reader is referred for that part alſo of his Story, which relates to his miraculous Converſion; and the no leſs vigorous Efforts of his better directed Zeal, for the Advancement of the Chriſtian Faith. This began immediately to appear, by entering publickly into the Service of it; by retiring out of *Damaſcus*, and becoming the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel in *Arabia Petræa*. From hence, after two Years, he returned to *Damaſcus*, and preached Chriſt publickly in the Synagogue there. The Malice of the Jews, being incenſed for having loſt ſo conſiderable a Champion, purſued him cloſe. They contrived all poſſible means diſpatch him; and, after many other Stratagems in vain, made their Requeſt to the Governor under *Aretas* King of *Arabia Petræa* (into whoſe hands, by the Defeat of *Herod*'s Army, that City had now fallen) that he would gratify them in his Deſtruction. The Gates were Day and Night moſt ſtrictly guarded, to prevent his Eſcape; but the Diſciples let him down over the City Wall in a Basket: Which Place is ſtill ſaid to be ſhew'd to Travellers, near a Gate called St. *Paul*'s Gate. After three Years from his Converſion, he went up to *Jeruſalem* to ſee *Peter*; Who about this time returned from confirming the *Samaritan* Converts. His Converſion being made known by *Barnabas*, he was, after ſome Fear and Scruples, received by the Apoſtles and Diſciples, and had the right hand of Fellowſhip given him by them, after fifteen Days ſtay with *Peter*. In this time the *Grecians*, againſt whom he diſputed, endeavoured to kill him. But the Brethren ſent him away for *Cæſarea* and *Tarſus*. He preached in *Syria* and *Cilicia*; And, after two Years Labour in thoſe Regions,

Galat. i. 17.

Acts ix. 22--25.

2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

Gal. i. 18.

Acts ix. 26, 27.

Ver. 29, 30.

Gal. i. 21.

Acts xi. 25, 26.

gions, returning again to *Tarſus*, he was fetch'd by *Barnabas* to *Antioch*, there to aſſiſt him, in the Converſion and Confirmation of that City. Here it was, that they firſt obtained that honourable Title of Chriſtians; Of which more hereafter. *Epiſt. S. Barn. Day.*

It is obſervable, that in all this time St. *Paul* had declined, as much as was poſſible, every place, where any Chriſtian Churches were begun. Of which the Reaſon given to the *Galatians* is, that he might not be thought to receive his Inſtruction from Men, but by Revelation from Chriſt himſelf. Therefore, even when in the Neighbourhood ſo long, he went not of his own accord to *Antioch*. Gal. i. 15--24.

But now, after a Year's ſtay there, the Chriſtians made choice of Him and *Barnabas*, to convey the Charity of the Converts to the Brethren at *Jeruſalem*; upon intimation of the great Famine, which ſhortly after afflicted thoſe parts. (This Journey is not mentioned in the Epiſtle to the *Galatians*.) From hence they returned to *Antioch* again, and brought with them *Mark*. Here the Holy Ghuſt ſeparated them for the Work of the Goſpel. Acts xi. 26, 27--30. Acts xii. 25. ---xiii. 2.

About this time St. *Paul* is thought to have been caught up to Heaven. 2. Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4.

Leaving that City, they came firſt to *Seleucia*, then to *Cyprus*, and preached particularly at *Salamis*: Afterwards at *Paphas*, where they found the Proprætor *Sergius Paulus*, a prudent Man, and one, who after good Deliberation, received the Faith. This Converſion was chiefly occaſioned by the Judgment of God, which, immediately upon St. *Paul*'s words, fell upon *Elymas* the Sorcerer, who ſtrove to prevent the Proconſul. Acts xiii. 4--12.

From this Conqueſt our Apoſtle is by many affirmed to have had the Surname of *Poul*: Not unlike to the *Roman* Cuſtom of giving new Names, after remarkable Hierom Catal. Script.

markable Victories. Though by ſome it is thought to have been impoſed with his other Name: It being the Cuſtom to do ſo, and the former Opinion ill conſiſting with the Exemplary Humility of the Perſon. Hence they went to *Perga* in *Pamphylia*, (where *John Mark*, left them) and afterwards to *Antioch* in *Piſidia*. Here, after a long and eloquent Sermon made by St. *Paul*, the Jews, envious at their good Reception, raiſed a Tumult in the City; applied themſelves to the honourable Women chiefly, and by Their means forced the Apoſtles departure to *Iconium*; And, after ſome ſtay here, their Malice purſuing them thither alſo, cauſed them to haſten to *Lyſtra*. Here, by an eminent Miracle perform'd upon a Cripple, the People were ſo tranſported, as to think them Gods. Bringing therefore Sacrifices, they would needs have honoured them therewith. Calling *Paul*, as chief Speaker, *Mercury*; and *Barnabas*, perhaps for his Age and Gravity, *Jupiter*. They knew and believed, that there was a Divine Power manifeſted in theſe Miracles, but applied it to the Inſtruments, not to the Author. The perverſe Spite of the Jews follow'd them again hither; And did ſo alter the People's Sentiments, that the very Perſon, whom but even now they would have adored with the moſt humble Proſtrations, they now drag out of the City, and ſtone him. Being left therefore for dead, when the Diſciples came, probably to inter his Body, he roſe up, went back into the City for that night, and the *next day departed with Barnabas* to *Derbe*. Hence, after Converſion of Multitudes, they returned to *Lyſtra*, and the reſt of the Cities forementioned, confirming them in the Doctrine they had lately received, and ordaining Elders in every Church. Then, returning through *Piſidia*, and *Pamphylia*, after preaching again at *Perga*, they went down

Acts xiii. 13, 14 ---50, 51.

Ch. xiv. 2---6.

Ver. 8---18.

Acts xiv. 19.

Ver. 20--23

Ver. 24---28.

down into *Attalia*. From thence at laſt they came to *Antioch*; ſtaying with the reſt of the Diſciples of that place a conſiderable time, full of Joy and Thanks for the ſucceſs of their Miniſtry. During their abode in this City, roſe that Diſſenſion concerning the Neceſſity, or Indifference, of obſerving the Moſaick Rites, which gave occaſion to the great Synod at *Jeruſalem*. The Proſelytes therefore, deſiring to be well ſatisfied, and go upon ſure grounds; As alſo the Humility of *Paul* and his Fellow-Labourers, being not content to rely upon their own Judgments in this Affair; It was propoſed, that the deciſion of this Queſtion might be referred to the general Aſſembly of Apoſtles at *Jeruſalem*. *Paul* and *Barnabas* carried the Meſſage; whoſe coming cauſed great Joy among the Diſciples and Converts throughout *Phœnice* and *Samaria*, as well as at *Jeruſalem*. And the Succeſs of their Preaching among the Gentiles, ſeemed a good Argument of God's approving the Faith of the Gentiles, although uncircumciſed. This is the Journey to *Jeruſalem*, mentioned in the Second to the *Galatians*, *Ver.* 1. The event of all was, that the Gentiles ſhould be obliged to no more Obſervances, than thoſe, who are generally called Proſelytes of the Gates; which conſiſted chiefly in the Seven Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*. *Paul* therefore and *Barnabas* were diſpatch'd to *Antioch*, with the Decrees of the Council. Hither ſhortly after *Peter* alſo came, at which time happened the ſharp Conteſt between Him and St. *Paul*, mentioned hereafter in St. *Peter*'s Life.

Acts. xv. 1. ---29.

Acts xv. 30. Gal. ii. 11--14.

Judas and *Silas* (called elſewhere *Silvanus*) were by the Apoſtles ſent to accompany *Paul* and *Barnabas* to *Antioch*. The Former returned to *Jeruſalem*; but the Latter willing to continue with St. *Paul*, was by him choſen a Companion of his Travels. For now they were preparing for a freſh

2 Cor. i. 19. 1 Theſſ. i. 1. 2 Theſſ. i. 1.

freſh Expedition; in which *Barnabas*, upon a Diſpute concerning *Mark*, left *Paul*, and betook himſelf to his Native Iſland, *Cyprus*. St. *Paul*, after he had been recommended to the Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance of God, by the Prayers of the Church, makes a Viſit to the ſeveral Places, where he had planted Chriſtianity. Going therefore to *Syria* and *Cilicia*, hence, as is moſt probably conjectured, it was, and about this time, that he paſſed over into *Crete*. But, not being permitted to ſtay there long, he conſtituted *Titus* Biſhop of that place; whom he had taken with him inſtead of *Mark*, when He, leaving them, went from the Work at *Perga*.

Acts xv. 36--40.

Ver. 41.

Afterwards he returned to *Derbe* and *Lyſtra*, where he met with *Timothy*: Who, by his Innocency of Life and Converſation, had obtained a good Report of the Brethren there. And being, by his Education, and eſpecially his Knowledge of the Scriptures, qualified for that Employment; St. *Paul* took him as his Coadjutor in the Propagation of Chriſtianity. But willing, in Ceremonies and indifferent Cuſtoms, rather to conform to Perſons of a contrary Perſuaſion, than by punctually aſſerting his Privilege, uncharitable to cauſe Diſſenſions and widen Breaches; that he might not give Offence to the Jews in thoſe parts, he circumciſed *Timothy*, who was now his Fellow-Traveller through *Galatia* and *Phrygia*. They would have continued their Journey as far as *Aſia*, but were by God diverted. Being come therefore to *Myſia*, and attempting in vain to go into *Bythinia*, they came to *Troas*; where St. *Luke* ſeems to have joined him. From hence *Paul* by a Viſion was directed into *Macedonia*. At *Philippi* they had great Influence upon their Auditors, more particularly one *Lydia*, a Seller of Purple; who entertained them during their abode

Acts xvi. 1, 2.

See 2 Tim. Chap. i. 5. and Chap. iii. 14, 15.

Acts xvi. 3 ----6.

Ver. 7---10.

abode in that City. Here happen'd to be a Maid poſſeſs'd with a Devil, who by Divination had brought her Maſters conſiderable Gains, She, meeting *Paul* and his Companions, as they went to one of the *Proſeuchæ*, or Oratories, declared them to be, as indeed they were, the Servants of the moſt High God, and Preachers of the Way to Salvation. He, well knowing, that Chriſt's Religion needed not the Teſtimony of Hell to confirm it, (though it can extort even that) by healing the Demoniack, and taking away the Cauſe, from whence her Maſters received their beloved Gains, was preſently aſſaulted by the enraged People. They were not more ready to execute, than their Magiſtrates were to give, an unjuſt Sentence. Therefore, after a ſevere Scourging and other barbarous Indignities, they caſt the Apoſtles, though unconvicted, into Priſon; And, not content with confining them there, the Dungeon and Stocks were appointed for their portion. Their vain Malice was preſently defeated by an Earthquake, which open'd all the Priſon-doors; and by a ſudden Light, which conveyed Joy and Praiſe in the Apoſtles Hearts, in the midſt of Darkneſs and Iron. The Fright drove the Gaoler to deſpair; and had made him prevent the Sentence, which would enſue upon the Priſoners eſcape, by Self-Murther; had not *Paul* aſſured him of their yet being ſafe in Cuſtody. He, who was now Their Captive, with all the Offices of Courteſy and Gentleneſs, ſoon changed his former Diſpoſition; and gave ſuch evident proofs of Faith and Repentance, as to be baptized himſelf, and to bring his whole Family over Proſelytes to this perſecuted Religion. The Magiſtrates next Morning would have diſmiſſed the Apoſtles; but St. *Paul* willing to ſhew them, how great their Injuſtice had been towards him, and what Dangers themſelves were become liable to, by committing ſuch Violence upon

Ver. 12---28.

Ver. 29---34.

Ver. 35---40.

Denizens of *Rome*, did not accept of the Diſcharge; till they had firſt made Acknowledgment and publick Retractation of this their Fact. Which done, St. *Paul*, after ſome Conference with the Converts at *Lydia*'s Houſe, departed.

Hence he paſs'd through *Amphipolis* and *Apollonia*, and came to *Theſſalonica*, the Metropolis of *Macedonia*; where he diſputed in the Synagogues of the Jews, mightily convincing them of the Truth of his Doctrine. Their reſtleſs Malice raiſed a Commotion, which, for want of the Apoſtles, wreck'd itſelf upon their Landlord *Jaſon*; He however, upon Security for his good Behaviour, was diſmiſs'd; and *Paul* and *Silas* were by the Brethren (fearing greater Diſturbances and Dangers) conveyed by night to *Beræa*. Here their Preaching met with good ſucceſs; the Perſons being ſuch, as are fitteſt for its Reception. For neither did their Obſtinacy make them, like the Jews, deaf to this new Doctrine; nor a Temper too credulous and eaſy incline them to embrace any thing, that was not well weighed and very rational. And indeed the Chriſtian Religion is ſo reaſonable an Inſtitution, that no Man can be ſo well perſuaded of it, or adhere with ſo great ſatisfaction to it, as He, who grounds his Faith upon ſound Reaſon. From hence alſo the *Theſſalonian* Jews forced them to retire; wherefore *Paul* was ſent privily to *Athens*, leaving the reſt of his Company, with orders to follow him thither ſpeedily. From *Athens* he ſent *Timothy* to *Theſſalonica*, and, whilſt he was here alone, for his Diverſion probably, and to ſatisfy his Curioſity, he went about to ſeveral parts of the City, to ſee the Rarities of it. He found abundance of Superſtition and ignorant Zeal for themſelves knew not what Deities. The *Athenians* being, by their own Authors, as well as by St. *Luke* in this place, noted for great Lovers of Variety and Novelty. Which

Acts xvii. 1--12.

1 Theſſ. iii. 1--2.

Acts xvii. 16, 33.

Temper

Temper ſhewed itſelf in nothing more eminently, than the greedy entertaining of any upſtart Religion. St. *Paul*, perceiving the miſerable Condition of the Inhabitants, thought this a fit place and time for him, to apply himſelf to the Diſcharge of his great Work; and to try, if the true Religion might find as favourable an Acceptance at their hands, as ſo many falſe and abſurd Opinions had formerly done. But alas! He was ſure to find conſiderable Oppoſition, when preaching Doctrines ſo vaſtly different, and almoſt contrary, to whatever they had before been taught. The *Stoicks* Pride could never bend to a Chriſtian Humility; Nor the *Epicureans* Luſts endure a ſober and ſevere Life; Nor their Intereſt admit of a Reſurrection and Judgment after this Life. They therefore encounter him, and affording him no better Terms, than that of *Babler* and a *ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods*, (ſuppoſing poſſibly *Anaſtaſis*, or the Reſurrection, to be ſome new and as yet unheard of Deity) bring him before the Senate at *Areopagus*.

Here, in a moſt excellent Diſcourſe, he endeavour'd to convince them of their preſent Errors and Deluſions; and to inform them, who that true God was, whom they, under falſe Notions, blindly worſhipped. This he enforced by Arguments out of their own Poets; ſhewing them, how near, and how eaſy to be found he was, by every one that would feel after him. That This is the very Perſon, whom they addreſs'd themſelves to by the Name of Ἄγνωστος Θεὸς, or *Unknown God*. They counted it a Prerogative of the Divine Majeſty, to give Men but faint Glimpſes in the Nature of its ſelf. And accordingly we are told, that *Ammon*, or *Amun*, the great *Egyptian* Deity, ſignifies *hidden*: And thus *Iſaiah* himſelf calls the God of his People; *Verily thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf, O God, of Iſrael, the Saviour*. His *Chap.* xlv. 15.

Diſcourſe to this Senate had notwithſtanding ſome effect; and particularly upon *Dionyſius*, of whom it will not be amiſs to take this ſhort Account.

Acts xvii. 34.

He is ſaid in his Youth to have travelled into *Egypt*, there to ſtudy Aſtronomy: In which Science that Country was excellent. Together with him one *Apollophanes*, a famous Rhetorician of that Age, was at *Heliopolis* in *Egypt*, at the time of our Saviour's Crucifixion. *Dionyſius*, aſtoniſh'd at the miraculous and altogether preternatural Eclipſe of the Sun, which then happen'd, is ſaid to have broke out into this Expreſſion, *That* certainly at that time God himſelf ſuffer'd, or was much concern'd for ſome body that did. He, after his return and Converſion by St. *Paul*, being upbraided by his former Companions, for revolting from his Principles, and for the Treachery of uſing the Weapons of *Athens* againſt herſelf, her Learning to confute her falſe Religion, reply'd, that this Accuſer rather might be found guilty of uſing Divine Things againſt God the Author of them, whom that miraculous Eclipſe could not convert. St. *Paul*, having ſufficiently inſtructed *Dionyſius*, in the Principles and Duties required of him to believe and perform, (his Learning, and other good Accompliſhments and Virtues, qualifying him for the diſcharge of ſo great a Truſt) is thought to have conſecrated him the firſt Biſhop of *Athens*.

See Dr. Cave *in St.* Paul.

The next Stage of St. *Paul*'s laborious Life was *Corinth*, whither he betook himſelf upon his Journey from *Athens*. Meeting here with *Priſcilla* and *Aquila*, (who fled thither upon their Baniſhment from *Rome*, by the Edict of *Claudius* the Emperor againſt all Jews) he inſtructed them in the Chriſtian Faith. And, that he might give the leſs offence to his new Converts, and be leſs chargeable to them, he

Acts xviii.

he wrought with them at his own Trade, in which he was brought up; That of a Tent-maker. Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, that this Vocation ſhould be joined to the more ingenuous part of his Education, That of Philoſophy, and the Law. For it was a received Cuſtom amongſt the Jews, ſo to do. And one of their Proverbial Expreſſions is, That he that teaches not his Son ſome Trade, teaches him to be a Thief. Hither *Silas* and *Timotheus* came to him, after whoſe Arrival he ſeems to have written his firſt Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*. Thus aſſiſted, he attacks the Jews with greater Vigour: But his ill ſucceſs upon them cauſed him more eſpecially to apply himſelf to the Gentiles. A Year and ſix Months Preaching had had conſiderable Influence upon many of the *Corinthians*; particularly on the Ruler of the Synagogue and his Family, and a Heavenly Viſion had increaſed the Apoſtles Hopes of a plentiful Harveſt.

This long Calm promiſed no leſs, had it not been at laſt diſturbed by the Envy of the Jews. They, with great Violence dragging St. *Paul* before the Proconſul's Tribunal, full of clamorous Complaints, and Accuſations of having violated their Law, were by Him rebuked, for bringing ſuperſtitious and impertinent Cauſes, not fit for him to determine. Having therefore thrown their Indictment out of the Court, he was forced, if not to uſe, yet at leaſt to permit and connive at, Violence in return, without which they were not to be quelled. For, to ſhew his diſlike, when the Greeks took *Soſthenes* the chief Ruler of the Jewiſh Synagogue, and a principal Man in this tumultuous Inſurrection, and beat him; *Gallio*, the Proconſul, (and Brother to the famous *Seneca*) to ſhew his diſlike of theſe Appeals, did not offer in the leaſt to vindicate him from the Affront, *but cared for none of theſe things*. Some time longer the Apoſtle ſtaid here, and is thought then to write his

Chap. xviii. 12. *Ver.* 17.

Second to the *Theſſalonians*. Having con-
Ver. 18. firmed the Brethren, he departed into *Syria*, deſigning for *Jeruſalem*. With him were alſo *Priſcilla* and *Aquila*, whom he took with him to *Epheſus*, and left them behind him there.

The Hiſtory makes mention here of a Nazarite's Vow, as is generally agreed. The Nature whereof may be ſeen in the vith Chapter of *Numbers*. But who the Perſon was that ſhaved his Head an account of that Vow, is not ſo generally agreed. St. *Jerom* is ſaid to have been the firſt, who underſtood this to be St. *Paul*'s Action and Vow; who hath indeed been followed in that Opinion by Perſons of great Name. But others, and particularly St. *Chryſoſt.* in *Act. Homil.* 39, 40. interprets it of *Aquila*. So does *Grotius* upon the place; giving this for a reaſon, why *Priſcilla* is firſt named, becauſe the Connexion would be better preſerved, when an Action of *Aquila* was immediately to follow. And our learned and laborious *Cave*, notwithſtanding the weight of Authorities on the other ſide, ſays thus, *At* Cenchreæ — Aquila (*for of Him it is certainly to be underſtood*) *ſhaved his Head*, &c. *Liv. of Apoſt.* pag. 83 *. This Matter, ſince the Text hath left it doubtful, the Reader will be content to have it continue ſo. I therefore go on to That which is of greater Certainty and Importance, *viz.* That St. *Paul*, while at *Epheſus*, diſputed ſome time in the Synagogues, but would not be prevailed with to defer his Journey to *Jeruſalem*, by a longer ſtay there. Having therefore landed at *Cæſarea*, and ſaluted the Church at *Jeruſalem*, he returned to *Antioch*: And having, in his Travels through *Galatia* and *Phrygia*, ſtrengthened his Converts, which he had gained to the Chriſtian Faith, he came again to *Epheſus*. In his abſence *Apollos*, by the Inſtructions of *Priſcilla* and *Aquila*,

* *So likewiſe* Heinſius *in his Exercitations on the place*: De-Aquilâ itaque, non de Paulo, accipiendum.

Ver. 23.

See Chap. xvi. 6.

quila, had made great progreſs in this new Diſcipline; whoſe Learning and perſuaſive Eloquence render'd him afterwards in an eminent manner advantagious, and a very powerful Adjutant to St. *Paul* in his great Work. He accordingly went to *Corinth*, with recommendatory Letters from the Brethren; and was there at the time of St. *Paul*'s return to *Epheſus*. Here the Apoſtle baptized ſeveral Diſciples, diſputed three Months in the Synagogue, and afterwards for two Years, in the School of *Tyrannus*.

Acts xviii. 24. ----28.

Chap. xix. 1--10.

The Jews had ſeveral Incantations in Uſe and Veneration; which they held in greater Credit, becauſe of an Opinion common among them, that Theſe had been invented by, and were derived from *Solomon*. The effect of theſe was (as their own Hiſtorian relates) healing Diſeaſes, and diſlodging Evil Spirits: And the Perſons skilled in them were diſtinguiſhed by the Title of *Exorciſts*. Some of theſe, obſerving the many miraculous Cures wrought by St. *Paul*, to add greater Force to their Charms, preſumed to change their Form, by invoking the Name of *Jeſus* over a Demoniack. It pleaſed God, upon this occaſion, to put a viſible difference, between Them, who applied this powerful Name regularly and with Commiſſion; and Others, who of their own Heads and for Ill Deſigns, dared to uſurp it. For the Demoniack prevail'd over theſe Exorciſts, to the hazard of their Lives; and at the ſame time made an extorted Confeſſion of the Efficacy of that ſacred Name, and the Authority of his Apoſtle. This Event contributed to the raiſing St. *Paul*'s Character yet higher; and had a very amazing conſequence, in the Converſion of many from Paganiſm, who had addicted themſelves to the Studies of Magick, for which *Epheſus* was particularly famous. Theſe Men gave a coſtly

Joſeph Ant. L. viii. C. 2.

Acts xix. 13 -----16.

Ver. 17---20.

coſtly Teſtimony of their Sincerity, by publickly burning the Books that taught thoſe Black Arts, to the value (as a Learned Author computes) of at leaſt fifteen hundred Pounds Sterling.

Dr. *Cave.*

Ver. 21, 22. St. *Paul* had now thoughts of viſiting *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, by taking thoſe Places in his way to *Jeruſalem*: After which, he purpoſed to go to *Rome*. In purſuance of that deſign, *Timothy* and *Eraſtus* were ſent before him into *Macedonia*. Himſelf halted behind, detain'd probably by the Neceſſity of anſwering a Letter brought him from *Corinth* by *Apollos*, which is done in that Epiſtle, intitled his *Firſt to the Corinthians*. He ſeems at this time alſo to have written his Epiſtle to the *Galatians*.

During this Stay, that famous Tumult happen'd, of which we have a large Deſcription in the xixth of the *Acts*. It was begun and fomented by Men, whoſe Gain was Godlineſs; and the Reverence to *Diana* ſerved for a popular Pretence, to ſecure the Trade of Shrine-making. The Apoſtle's Danger upon this occaſion was ſo great, and the People's Mind ſo inflamed, that it was not thought proper to delay his intended Journey any longer. Coming therefore into *Macedonia*, he is ſuppoſed to have written thence his Second Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. After which, he paſſed three Months in *Greece*; Then, declining the Way into *Syria*, upon Intimation of a Conſpiracy againſt his Life, h ereturned through *Macedonia* into *Aſia*. At *Troas*, in his way, he brought *Eutychus* to Life again. Thence by ſeveral eaſy Voyages, he arrived at *Miletus*, where the Elders of the *Epheſian* Church meeting him, received that admirable Exhortation, contained in the xxth of the *Acts*: And not only That, but (certainly in the Courſe of theſe Travels related in that Chapter) *Timothy* for their Biſhop too.

Ver. 23,---41.

2 Cor. i. 8, 9, 10.

Acts xx. 1.

Ver. 2.

Ver. 3, 4.

Ver. 7,--12.

So

So probably did the *Romans* alſo then receive the Epiſtle written to them; as may appear from his Intention to ſee the Chriſtians there, mentioned before, compared with *Rom.* i. 10, 11. and the Journeyings through *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, *Acts.* xx. compared with *Rom.* xv. 19. and *Acts* xxi. with *Rom.* xv. 25. Acts xix. 21.

From *Miletus*, by ſeveral Stages ſet down *Acts* xxi. St. *Paul* came to *Jeruſalem*; not at all diverted from his Paſſage thither by the Prediction of thoſe Sufferings, which there awaited him. One part of his Buſineſs was, to bring thoſe charitable Collections to the Brethren, for which he ſo highly commends the Liberality of the Chriſtians in *Macedonia*; propoſing them as Patterns to the Diſciples at *Corinth*, and making an honourable Acknowledgment of them to the *Romans*. Acts xxi. 11, 15. Acts xxiv. 17. 2 Cor. viii. 10. —ix. 2. Rom. xv. 25, 26.

Then it was, that, after conſulting with St. *James* the Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*, and recounting the wonderful Succeſſes of his Miniſtry, he, to prevent Offence, declared his Compliance with the *Moſaical* Rites, by a Purification preſcrib'd under the Law. Some *Aſiatick* Jews, who had known his Doctrine and Converſation among the Gentiles abroad, enraged the People; and had endangered his being torn in pieces, had not the Captain of the *Roman* Guard reſcued and ſecured him in the Caſtle. The Method, about to be taken for his Examination, obliged him now again (as before at *Philippi*,) to aſſert the Privileges due to a Denizen of *Rome*: Whereupon he was brought before the Chief Prieſts and Council. At this Bar, having received an Indignity from the High-Prieſt, he remonſtrated the Illegality of the Violence offered to him, in Terms, that ſeem moſt naturally imputable to the Inadvertence of a Reſentment, Acts xxi. 18. Ver. 26. Ver. 27. Chap. xxii. 24. 25. Acts xvi. 37. Acts xxiii.

ment, too warm to attend to the Character of his Judge. At this Appearance, he found means to elude the Malice of his Enemies, by declaring himſelf a Phariſee, and engaging thoſe of the ſame Sect on his ſide. But that, which could not be done by Proceſs, was attempted by Treachery; for, upon pretence of a ſecond Hearing, an Ambuſh was laid to kill the Priſoner in his Paſſage to the Court. The timely Diſcovery of this Plot occaſioned his Conveyance by Night to *Cæſarea*; and made it neceſſary for him, now to be impleaded before the *Roman Governor*, then reſiding there.

Chap. xxiv. Here he was accuſed before *Felix*, who had five Years ſuſtained that Character. A Man, corrupt in his Adminiſtration, and otherwiſe very diſſolute in his Morals. However he forbore to give Sentence againſt St. *Paul*, and, to gratify his Curioſity, had a mind to hear ſomewhat concerning the Chriſtian Faith. The Apoſtle took that Opportunity of diſcourſing upon ſuch Topicks, as came home to the Governor's Caſe; Who with ſome Stings of Conſcience remanded him back into Cuſtody; and would have ſet him at Liberty, had not the diſappointed Expectations of a Bribe inclined him to do an acceptable Act to the Jews, by continuing a Priſoner, who diſdained to obtain his Freedom by indirect means.

Chap. xxv. *Feſtus* had no ſooner ſucceeded into this Poſt, but the Jews renew their Complaints againſt St. *Paul*. His Cauſe, at their Inſtance, was re-heard. At which time, upon a Motion made of carrying him back to *Jeruſalem*, the Apoſtle found it expedient to appeal to *Cæſar*. This was a Privilege alſo belonging to Subjects of *Rome*; that, upon any Suſpicion of foul dealing, they had Liberty to remove a Cauſe out of any inferior Court, and refer it to the Judgment of the Emperor in Perſon.

Chap. xxvi. *Agrippa*, *Herod*'s Succeſſor in the Tetrarchate of *Galilee*, came, with his Siſter *Bernice*,

Bernice, to pay their Compliments to the new Governor. *Feſtus* entertained them with an Account of St. *Paul*'s Caſe, and, at their Requeſt, ordered another publick Hearing. The Apoſtle's Account of his Converſion was ſo ſurpriſing, and his Vindication ſo ſtrong; that *Agrippa* declared in his Favour, and ſaw no reaſonable Objection to his Releaſe, except the Impracticableneſs of it, after an Appeal.

St. *Paul*'s Journey to *Rome* being thus determined, he was committed to the Charge of *Julius*, a Commander in the Emperor's own Band. They took a Ship of *Adramyttium*, (now *L'Andramiti*, or *Endramiti*) a Port near *Troas*. The Seaſon of the Year, (it being now the latter end of *September* or beginning of *October*) made ſailing ſlow and dangerous; which induced St. *Paul* to adviſe wintering in *Crete*. But the Centurion, over-ruled by the Maſter, ventured to Sea; and ſhortly after came on ſo tempeſtuous Weather, that the whole Company, for fourteen Days, gave themſelves all for loſt. Here again God ſignalized his Providence; Aſſuring the Apoſtle, that, for His ſake, all that ſailed with him ſhould be preſerved. Which comfortable News he imparted to his Companions, and the Event proved accordingly. For, though the Veſſel was loſt, not a Soul in her periſhed; but all got ſafe to the Iſle of *Melita* (now *Malta*.)

Chap. xxvii.

Ver. 24.

Chap. xxviii.

Here he was eminently diſtinguiſhed again. Firſt, by ſhaking a Viper off his Hand, without Prejudice from the venomous Creature; And then, by recovering from a Fever and Bloody-Flux the Father of *Publius*, the Principal Perſon in the Iſland. Both which procured him general Reſpect, and plenty of Proviſions for the remainder of his Voyage. After three Months he ſet forward again, and, being met by ſome Chriſtians on the way, was by them conducted to *Rome*.

Upon

Upon his Arrival, his firſt Care was to ſtand well with the Jews there; as Perſons, to whoſe Benefit he deſigned to apply himſelf immediately, and yet ſuch, as were moſt likely to take Offence at his Appeal, as if it were a Reproach to the Juſtice of their own Nation. Having therefore removed this Prejudice, and inſinuated the Cauſe of his Suffering to be that, which their own Religion had trained them up in the Belief and Expectation of, he gained ſo far upon their Affections, as to have a ſecond Conference by their own Appointment, for explaining the Principles of Chriſtianity to them. The Succeſs of this was different; ſome yielding, other refuſing to be convinced. Mean while St. *Paul* was treated with great Courteſy by the Government, ſuffered to dwell in a Houſe of his own providing, only with one Keeper; Free acceſs allowed to him; Of which the proper Uſe was made, by publiſhing to all his Viſiters the Doctrine of the Goſpel. And this Liberty of Converſation he enjoyed, and improved, for two Years together.

Ver. 16.

Ver. 30, 31.

Thus far St. *Luke* leads us in his Book of the *Acts*. Toward the end of thoſe two Years, St. *Paul*, having ſome Proſpect of a ſpeedy Releaſe, writes his Epiſtles to the *Philippians*, *Epheſians*, *Coloſſians*, and *Philemon*. After which he went into *Italy*, where he waited for *Timothy*'s coming, (who was ſet at Liberty ſhortly after him) and then wrote his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. Upon his Arrival, he proſecutes his long-intended Journey into *Spain*, and is probably thought, from thence to come over and preach the Goſpel in *Britain*. Afterwards he went into *Crete*; and, having left *Titus* there in Quality of their Biſhop, came from thence in Company with *Timothy* to *Judæa*. Thence into *Aſia*; And, while *Timothy* went to *Epheſus*, he made his *firſt* Viſit to the *Coloſſians*, with

Hebr. xiii. 23, 24.

Parker's Antiq. Cantuar. *and Stillingfleet*'s Origin. *Britan.*

with an Intention of ſpending ſome time among them. This appears from his deſiring *Philemon*, a Perſon eminent in that Church, to provide him with Conveniences for ſome ſtay to be made there.

From hence deſigning for *Macedonia*, he deſires *Timothy* to continue ſtill at *Epheſus*. Before this Journey he excommunicated *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*. Arriving in *Macedonia*, he viſited *Philippi*, and tarried a good while there, as he had given them Expectations that he would, in his Epiſtle to that Church. From hence he is thought to have ſent his Firſt Epiſtle to *Timothy*, and that to *Titus*. The Time of writing both which, our Learned Biſhop *Pearſon* places in the 65th Year of Chriſt.

1 Tim. i. 3.

Ver. 20.

Phil. i. 25, 26.

The Winter following was ſpent at *Nicopolis*. Hence he moved to *Corinth*, where *Eraſtus* ſtayed behind him. After that to *Troas*, where he left the *Cloak and Parchments with Carpus*, which *Timothy* was afterwards ordered to bring with him. Then to *Miletus*, where he left *Trophimus* ſick. And at laſt, the Perſecution of the Chriſtians having ceaſed a conſiderable time before, he goes the ſecond time *Rome*.

Tit. iii. 12.

2 Tim. iv. 20.

Ver. 13.

Ver. 20.

Here he is made cloſe Priſoner, tryed for his Life by *Helius Cæſareanus*, whom he calls *the Lion*. This Man *Nero*, at his Departure into *Greece*, had left inveſted with exorbitant Powers, which he exerciſed after as exorbitant a manner. At this Tryal he complains of *Alexander* the Copperſmith's Malice, and of being deſerted by his Friends: And preſently after it, the *Second* Epiſtle to *Timothy* was written; In which there are ſeveral Preſages of his approaching Martyrdom.

Pearſon, Ann. Paul.

2 Tim. iv. 17.

Ver. 14, 16.

This

This Crown he obtained the Year following, together with St. *Peter*, though not by the ſame kind of Death. For St. *Paul*, as a *Roman* Citizen, could not be crucified, and therefore was beheaded with a Sword. His Body was buried in the *Via Oſtienſis* near *Rome*. A ſtately Church was built to the Honour of his Memory by *Conſtantine the Great*; which was afterwards enlarged and beautified by other of the ſucceeding Chriſtian Emperors.

Hieron. in Catal. Script.

See Dr. Cave.

The Reader is deſired to take notice, that this Order of St. Paul's *Travels and Sufferings proceeds upon the Scheme of our moſt Learned Biſhop* Pearſon *in his* Annal. Paulin.

The COLLECT.

Acts ix. 15.
Rom. xv. 19. *&c.*
2 Cor. x. 14, 16.
Coloſſ. i. 6.
1 Theſſ. i. 8, 9.

O God, who, through the Preaching of the bleſſed Apoſtle St. *Paul*, haſt cauſed the Light of the Goſpel to ſhine throughout the World; Grant, we beſeech thee, that we, having his wonderful Converſion in remembrance, may ſhew forth our Thankfulneſs unto thee for the ſame, by following the holy Doctrine which he taught, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord Lord. *Amen.*

For the EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE.

Acts ix. 1.

1, 2. *Saul* in the Fury of his Zeal, did not wait for, but addreſs'd himſelf to the High Prieſt and Sanhedrim for Orders to take up all Jews at *Damaſcus*, who confeſſed Jeſus Chriſt, that they might be made publick Examples for the Terror of others.

1. *AND Saul yet breathing out threatnings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord, went unto the high prieſt.*

2. *And deſired of him letters to Damaſcus to the ſynagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jeruſalem.*

3, 4. This Light, that ſhone about Him and his Fellow-Travellers, was brighter than the Sun it-

3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damaſcus: and ſuddenly there ſhined round about him a light from heaven.*

4. *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice ſaying*

ſaying unto him, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?

ſelf; at the Glory whereof He, and They who were with him, being ſtruck with Amazement, fell to the ground. *Comp. Chap.* xxii. 9. xxvi. 14.

5. *And he ſaid, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord ſaid, I am Jeſus whom thou perſecuteſt: It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.*

5. *Saul* ſaid in anſwer to the voice, (which to Him was articulate and diſtinct, but not underſtood by the reſt)

6. *And he trembling and aſtoniſhed, ſaid, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord ſaid unto him, Ariſe, and go into the city, and it ſhall be told thee what thou muſt do.*

6. It cannot but be ill for thee, to contend with one ſo much mightier than thyſelf.

7. *And the men which journeyed with him ſtood ſpeecheleſs, hearing a voice, but ſeeing no man.*

7. They heard the Noiſe, but they did not underſtand the Words: For ſo the Greek Word is often uſed in Scripture, particularly by this Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 2. and thus the Text here is very reconcileable with that *Acts* xxii. 9. where they are ſaid not to have heard (not to have underſtood) the Voice; which yet in this they are ſaid to hear, (that is, to perceive the ſound of.)

8. *And Saul aroſe from from the Earth: and when his eyes were opened, he ſaw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damaſcus.*

8. The exceſſive ſtrength of the Light deprived him of ſight, *Chap.* xxii. 11.

9. *And he was three days without ſight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

10. *And there was a certain diſciple at Damaſcus, named Ananias, and to him ſaid the Lord in a viſion, Ananias. And he ſaid, Behold, I am here, Lord.*

11. *And the Lord ſaid unto him, Ariſe, and go into the ſtreet which is called Straight, and enquire in the houſe of Judas, for one called Saul, of Tarſus: for behold, he prayeth,*

12. *And hath ſeen in a viſion a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his ſight.*

13. *Then Ananias anſwered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy ſaints at Jeruſalem:*

14. *And here he hath authority from the chief prieſts, to bind all that call on thy Name.*

15. *But the Lord ſaid unto him, Go thy way: for he is a choſen veſſel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Iſrael.*

15. This Man, ſo remarkable for his Zeal to ſuppreſs, ſhall be a moſt eminent of Inſtrument of advancing, my Goſpel;

16. *For I will ſhew him how great things he muſt ſuffer for my name's ſake.*

16. And endure terrible Perſecutions, as he of late inflicted ſuch: And yet the proſpect of Sufferings ſhall in no degree take off from his Endeavours to propagate my Truth.

17. *And Ananias went his way, and entred into the houſe; and putting his hands on him, ſaid, Brother Saul, the Lord, (even Jeſus that appeared unto thee*

17. Hence ſome have thought it probable, that Jeſus exhibited himſelf to *Saul,*

Saul, as formerly to *Stephen*, in ſome glorious Form; but that is not a neceſſary Inference from the Words.

in the way as thou cameſt) hath ſent me, that thou mighteſt receive thy ſight, and be filled with the holy Ghoſt.

18. After *Ananias* had declared the Meſſage of God, and what Work he had choſen *Saul* to, *Acts* xxii. 13, 14, 15, 16-----

18. *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales: and he received ſight forthwith, and aroſe, and was baptized.*

19. *And when he had received meat, he was ſtrengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the diſciples which were at Damaſcus.*

20. *And ſtraightway he preached Chriſt in the ſynagogues, that he is the ſon of God.*

21. This was a very great Surprize to all his Hearers, who knew very well, with how different a purpoſe he came thither.

21. *But all that heard him were amazed, and ſaid, Is not this he that deſtroyed them which called on this name in Jeruſalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief prieſts?*

20, 22. His Knowledge, and the Succeſs of his Arguments grew greeter every Day: Inſomuch that the

22. *But Saul increaſed the more in ſtrength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damaſcus, proving that this is very Chriſt.*

Jews of that place could not anſwer the Proofs he brought, that Jeſus is the promiſed Meſſiah, ſtiled alſo the Son of God in their own Scriptures of the Old Teſtament.

COMMENT.

WE have here a particular Account of St. *Paul*, Before, In, and After his Converſion. Of which I know not how we can profit ourſelves more to the purpoſe of this Feſtival, than by making ſome uſeful and practical Reflections upon each of theſe Circumſtances, according to the Deſcription given of him, in This and Other Scriptures taken into the Service of the Day.

Chap. xxii.
Chap. xxvi.

1. The Conſideration, which naturally offers itſelf from his Temper and Behaviour, while yet Unconverted, is That of a miſguided Zeal; and what Allowances we may hope God will make, for ſuch Deſigns and Actions, as do really proceed from it.

That This was manifeſtly St. *Paul*'s Caſe, the Apologies he makes for himſelf, inform us. He frankly owns

owns the Fury of his Proceedings; the Barbarity of his Intentions; and the indefatigable Pains he took, by all means to drive thoſe, who are already Chriſtians, to Apoſtacy; and to terrify others from taking upon them a Profeſſion, ſo ill treated in the World. But then he charges all this Heat to the Prejudices of his Education, which had poſſeſs'd his Mind with more than ordinary Veneration for the Law and Tradition of the Jews. And, in regard our Bleſſed Saviour had always been repreſented by *the Rulers of the People and the Elders of Iſrael*, as a Breaker and Changer of the Law; therefore this Phariſee, (agreeably to the Genius of that rigorous Sect) *verily thought with himſelf, that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth.*

Chap. xxii. 4, 5. ---xxvi. 10, 11.

Gal. i. 13. Acts xxvi. 4, 5.

Chap. xxvi. 9.

In Conſequence of this Perſuaſion he acted, as was natural to a Man, ſenſible that the preſent Dictates of every one's Conſcience are the next immediate Light, by which the Moral Good or Evil of our Actions is repreſented to us. And, in regard he followed this Light without any Colluſion or Prevarication, he did what he did upon a Notion of Duty, and wanted not the Regulation of his Will, but only the better Information of his Underſtanding: From hence he takes upon him to affirm, that he had all along lived in *good Conſcience before God.* But how are we to underſtand this Conſcience to be good? Was it free from Error? Or were the Actions, done in compliance with it, void of Offence before God? No ſuch matter. For he elſewhere calls himſelf *Blaſphemer, Injurious, Perſecutor*, nay, *Chief of Sinners*; and all, for that very reaſon, *becauſe he perſecuted the Church of God.* His Conſcience therefore was only ſo far good, as it could teſtify his Integrity, and that he was an honeſt, though miſtaken Man. But his continuing

Acts xxiii. 1.

1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

under that Miſtake was a Sin; and his doing ſo many violent Inhumane Outrages upon Chriſtians, for no other Provocation but difference of Opinion, was a much greater Sin. He might and ought to have conſidered this new Doctrine, with all the wonderful Atteſtations to it, calmly and fairly. And, had he done ſo, *Jeſus* would have been found, not a Deſtroyer, but a Fulfiller of that Law, for the Honour of which he was ſo intemperately zealous. Though therefore Ignorance were the ground of all his Rage, yet even that Ignorance was a Sin; becauſe the Object of it was not the Facts he was doing, (in which Caſe Ignorance acquits from Guilt) but it was Ignoranee of the Rule he ought to act by. Now this every Man is bound at his peril to know; and cannot be Innocent, if, for want of ſuch Knowledge, he ſhall be carried away to do that which is amiſs. This then was St. *Paul*'s Caſe, *He thought he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth.* Whereas had the Matter been fairly examined, (all Prejudices apart) the reſult would have been, that *he ought to do every* thing in his Power, that could be any way ſerviceable to that very *Name.*

Mean while, all Ignorance, which is not voluntary and affected, being not entirely a Fault, but in ſome meaſure a Misfortune, does without doubt render the Perſon's Caſe pitiable, and a proper Object of the Divine Compaſſion. This is the mitigation, allowed by St. *Peter* to the wickedeſt of all Facts, The Crucifixion of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*; *Brethren, I wot, that through Ignorance ye did it, as did alſo your Rulers.* Upon this our Lord himſelf grounds that Prayer upon the Croſs, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And to this it is, that St. *Paul* attributes his own Pardon, *I obtained Mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly in Unbelief.*

Acts. iii. 17.

Luke xxiii. 34.

1 Tim. i. 13.

Herein

Herein however we ſhall do well to contemplate the abſolute Freedom of God's Grace. Who, when he might moſt juſtly have left St. *Paul*, as he did thoſe Jews, under the Power and Puniſhment of Obſtinacy and Unbelief; choſe rather, for an Example and Encouragement to all well-meaning though miſtaken Men, to ſhew forth *in Him*, as himſelf expreſſes it, *all Long-ſuffering, for a Pattern to them who ſhould hereafter believe on him.* This gives 1 Tim. i. 16. us a right Notion of God's Proceeding with our great Apoſtle; and ſhews, that his Converſion and the happy Conſequences of it were an effect of 1 Tim. i. 14. *exceeding abundant Grace*; that his Ignorance, and the Facts owing to it, did plainly incline God to Mercy, becauſe the Ignorance was not wilful: But ſtill, that ſuch Ignorance could not engage or by any Covenant-right lay claim to Mercy; becauſe, with due Care and impartial Application, it might have been firſt prevented, or afterwards cured: That the Mercy obtained by St. *Paul*, was firſt a thorough Conviction of his Error, and perfect Knowledge of the Truth; then fervent Zeal, and fit Opportunities put into his Hands, to teſtify the Sincerity of his Intention; and to make ample Reparation to that Righteous Cauſe, which he had before with equal Zeal obſtructed and perſecuted.

All this, when rightly conſidered, is an excellent Warning, of how great Importance it is to every Man, That his Conſcience be rightly inform'd. That, in all Matters (thoſe relating to Religion eſpecially) we ſhould take all poſſible heed, not to be carried into any ſinful Exceſſes, by the Prejudices of Education, by the undue Admiration of Men's Perſons, by the Violence of our own Paſſions, by our Affection to any Party, by the Proſpect of any Secular Intereſt; Or, in ſhort, by any Regards whatſoever, except thoſe, which ſhall be found ſtrictly, and upon calm and diligent Enquiry, due to the Will of God. And for this Will we are to

depend upon the Teſtimony of his holy Word, for Matters there revealed; and, for Others not mentioned there, upon the reſult of our own beſt Reaſon, fairly repreſenting to us the true State and Merits of the Cauſe.

Again, As the Caſe of St. *Paul* before his Converſion ſhould induce us to prevent the Danger of an ignorant and erroneous Conſcience; ſo does it teach us, how to judge of ſuch Actions, as are done for want of that timely Care; and ſhews the great Guilt and Miſchief of miſtaken Principles. The Guilt is plain from hence; that Moral Good and Evil depend upon Reaſons intrinſick to the Things themſelves, and cannot be changed, either as to their Nature or Degree, by the Opinions entertain'd concerning them. If therefore an Action be Evil in itſelf, or declared ſo to be by any poſitive Law; It is not the thinking it Innocent or Good, Nor is it the Ignorance of that Law which pronounces it Evil, that can acquit the Party, who upon any preſent Perſuaſion ſhall venture to commit it. Becauſe this Perſuaſion is founded upon a Miſtake; and might have been rectified, by attending to that Rule, which every one with due Care may, and is bound at his peril to know. The Miſchief of ſuch Miſtakes is unconceiveable. For no Wickedneſs is ſo black, but Perſons, who proceed upon Prejudice, may by Degrees be brought to eſteem it, not only lawful, but even commendable and holy. Of this the Barbarities executed by St. *Paul* are indeed an eminent, but far from the only, Inſtance. For almoſt every Age hath felt by ſad Experience, that the Rights of Society have never been more dangerouſly inſulted, nor the ſacred Name of Religion more ſcandalouſly abuſed; than by the furious Attempts of thoſe ſeduced and unrelenting Zealots, who ſanctify all their Avarice, Oppreſſion and Cruelty, with the falſe Notions of reforming Abuſes, vindicating Religion, and doing God ſervice. So fatal to a Man's own

Self, So pernicious to other People, are thoſe blind Prepoſſeſſions, which naturally fly out into Rage and Violence; and, not having ſound Knowledge to temper their Heat, raſhly go into unwarrantable Meaſures, which no Goodneſs of Intention can make Atonement for.

But, in regard ſuch Intention was obſerved before to be a proper Motive for inclining the Mercy of God toward Them, who unwarily act amiſs under its Influence; The Example of St. *Paul* may be farther uſeful, by giving us Intimation, what ſort of Mercy that is; and upon what Terms there may be ground to hope for it. Now this in His Caſe (and we may judge proportionably of Others) was a powerful Awakening of his Conſcience; Enlightening that Judgment, which before had led him wrong; and turning that general Diſpoſition to ſerve God and promote his Truth, into the right and acceptable way of doing both. Happy therefore are thoſe miſtaken Men, who have (like Him) the Irregularities of their paſt Proceedings pardoned, their former Errors rectified, their well-intending Minds inform'd; And above all, their Wills made ready to ſubmit to, and comply with ſuch Means as the ordinary Methods of Knowledge and Salvation, ſeconded and ſet home by God's Grace, ſhall furniſh for thoſe Purpoſes. For we are not now to expect, that God ſhould go out of the common way, and make miraculous Converſions of every Man, who does ill without deſigning ill. And therefore, in order to profiting effectually by the Inſtance before us, it will be neceſſary, with ſome Care to conſider St. *Paul* in the Next State propounded; that is,

II. *Secondly*, With regard to the Time and Circumſtances of his Converſion. And here are ſeveral things related on God's, and ſeveral on St. *Paul*'s Part, which require our Conſideration.

On God's part we may obſerve, *Firſt*, The opening of this Scene by that Light from Heaven, which ſhone round St. *Paul* and his Fellow-Travellers; A ſudden, a *great* Light, a Light *above* even the *Brightneſs of the Sun*; tho' it were then high Noon, and the Sun conſequently in the full Strength of his Luſtre.

Acts ix. 3.
---xxii. 6.
xxvi. 13.

All this muſt be acknowledged very ſurprizing, if conſidered barely in itſelf, and with regard to the Nature of the thing; But, when we take in the Condition and Character of the Perſons concerned, there ariſes another Conſideration, which renders it more ſignificant and extraordinary. Now theſe were Jews, all zealous for the *Moſaick* Law, and converſant in the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament. They could not conſequently be ignorant, that ſuch ſtrong Emanations of Light as this, were the Method uſually made choice of by God, for exhibiting his Glory and peculiar Preſence. * Many Inſtances of that kind are recorded in the Books of *Moſes*, Many in the Prophetick Scriptures, which ſeem plainly to be intended, and were conſtantly underſtood, to this purpoſe. And thoſe Interpreters appear to have judged very reaſonably of the Caſe before us, who ſuppoſe the whole Company falling on their Faces to the Ground, to have done ſo; As well by that Act of Proſtration, to expreſs their profound Reverence of the Divinity, whoſe glorious Preſence that Brightneſs ſignified; as from the Strength of a Light, which they were not able to bear up againſt.

* Exod. xvi. 10.
---xxiv. 16, 17.
---xl. 34, 35.
Levit. ix. 23.
Num. xvi. 19, 42.
2 Chron. v. 14.
2 Chron. vii. 1, 2, 3.
Ezek. i. 4, 28.
---x. 4.
Maim. More Nevoch P. 1. *Cap.* 64.

Such †, it is evident, was wont heretofore to be the Behaviour of Holy Men, when thus made ſenſible, that God was more immediately approaching toward them. And it is eaſy to diſcern, how exceedingly

† Gen. xvii. 3.
Lev. ix. 24.
Num. xx. 6.
Ezek. i. 28.
---xliv 4.
Dan. vii. 17.
2 Chro. vii. 3.

ceedingly wiſe and proper an Introduction this was to the miraculous Converſion, now about to be wrought upon St. *Paul*. A Zeal ſo violent as His, would ask ſome uncommon and very forcible Motives, to perſuade and controul it. And a Change ſo ſtrange, as that now ready to be made, from the bittereſt of Perſecutors to the eagereſt and moſt laborious Apoſtle, would meet with greater Credit and Succeſs; in Proportion as it could be made appear, that God himſelf was at the bottom and beginning of it. Such unconteſted Marks of a Divine Preſence and Power were therefore of infinite Uſe, to be imparted to his Fellow-Travellers in common; as ſo many Witneſſes of the Terrors and Majeſty of Him, whoſe Symbol that Light was, appearing upon this Occaſion. And they were highly ſerviceable to St. *Paul* in particular; by giving a Check to his Fury, by ſtriking an Awe upon his Mind, by awakening his Attention, and diſpoſing him, with all due Submiſſion and Devotion, to be influenced by the following Parts of the Miracle, in which he was ſingled out from the reſt. For, though even here he was chiefly, there he was wholly and ſolely, concerned.

For the next thing remarkable in this Tranſaction, ſhews plainly, for whoſe ſake the Whole was meant. A Voice directed to St. *Paul* alone, in Words, which ſpeak the Meekneſs and Goodneſs, as the ſhining Glory, from whence it came, declared the Majeſty, of the Perſon uttering them. *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* are Words, carrying rather the Form of a gentle Expoſtulation, than that of Anger and Reproach; from One, who had ſo juſt Grounds of Reſentment given him, by the injurious Treatment of this miſtaken Zealot. It expreſſes the infinite Tenderneſs of this Myſtical Head, who, even in his glorified State, is a Sufferer in his afflicted Members; and who eſteems the Wrongs done to any of Them, done to Himſelf. It imports, that there could be no juſt Provocation alledged, for all the Out-

rages committed upon them that believed, purely becauſe they believed in Him. And therefore it calls upon the Committer of them, to recollect, and think better of a Matter, which had not been ſufficiently conſidered before. And, meeting with a Mind now calmed, and prepared for better Impreſſions, it produced a Deſire of more perfect Information, expreſs'd in that Queſtion, Who this Perſon was, that ſo kindly complained of ſuch ill Uſage from him? To this our Lord replies in few, but very ſignificant Words, that He was *Jeſus of Nazareth.* That very deſpiſed Man, whom St. *Paul* thought an Impoſtor, and as real and heinous a Malefactor, as any that commonly died the ſcandalous Death of the Croſs. And yet he now appeared to him, with all the confeſſed Evidences of the true God. Here therefore is implied the Certainty of our Saviour's Reſurrection, of his Living in Heaven, of his ſitting on the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high, of his Power and Dominion as Lord of all: The Truth of his Doctrine and Miracles; The Reaſonableneſs of that Faith ſo barbarouſly perſecuted; And eſpecially, The Danger of perſiſting in Attempts againſt him, ſure to be vain in themſelves, and fatal to the Undertakers. For thus much is manifeſtly deſigned by that laſt Sentence, *It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.* So comprehenſive are the Terms, in which our Lord delivered himſelf, when taken in Conjunction with the other Circumſtances of this Account: So powerful the Effect of this ſhort Converſation, of which none but St. *Paul* was made partaker. And to Him, who underſtood the true Force of the whole Argument, ſo ſtrong and convincing; that, without any Vindication of himſelf, or other Reply, except ſuch as requeſted and ſubmitted entirely to any farther Directions neceſſary for his Condition; the mighty Work was done in ſuch a manner, as muſt have rendered it a Miracle, almoſt equal to that of his Converſion, had he not been reduced and converted by it.

A *Third*

A *Third* Remark, proper upon this Occaſion, ariſes from the Method, in which a Change, ſo miraculouſly begun, was carried on to Perfection. Now it is very obſervable, that St. *Paul* was referred to *Ananias*; and that by His Miniſtry he received farther Inſtruction and Comfort, the Sacrament of Baptiſm, and the Recovery of his Sight. A ſignificant Emblem of his better Information; as the Blindneſs, he for three Days labour'd under, had been of the Darkneſs and Error formerly upon his Mind. But the Reflections I would principally recommend from this manner of Proceeding, are, *That* Almighty God, though he will not ſpare for Miracles in extraordinary Exigencies, does not yet think fit to be profuſe in them, where ſuch Neceſſity ceaſes: *That* even his uncommon Appearances, in order to Mens Conviction, do not render the Sacraments, and other eſtabliſhed Means of Converſion and Grace, either uſeleſs or needleſs: *That* it is One thing to be perſuaded of the Truth of Chriſtianity and ſincerely diſpoſed to obey it; and Another to be actually a Chriſtian: *That* Baptiſm, adminiſtred to a Convert under ſuch Circumſtances, is a ſufficient Intimation, how guilty and fatal a Neglect thoſe deluded People allow themſelves in, who treat this and other like Ordinances with Scorn and Contempt; who vainly preſume upon the Privileges of the Goſpel, before the Seals of the Covenant have ſecured their Right to them: And, *that* the moſt perverſe Abuſe Men can poſſibly make of this Miracle, would be, to go on ſecurely in Sin, and defer their Converſion, by neglecting to apply ſuch Means as are ordinarily neceſſary, and ordinarily ſufficient; upon idle Pretences of waiting for ſuch awakening and extraordinary Calls and Illuminations, as That, which God vouchſafed to the Apoſtle of this Day. The mighty Difference between His Caſe and Theirs will ſhortly appear, when we come to conſider the part, contributed by St. *Paul* himſelf, to the finiſhing

ing that wonderful Converſion, the Succeſs whereof our Church is now thankfully commemorating.

Mean while, we muſt leaſt of all omit to obſerve a *Fourth* Mercy on God's part, which in truth crowned all the reſt, I mean, The powerful Operation of Divine Grace upon his Mind. Without this Inward, the Outward, though altogether miraculous, had wanted its Effect. We have all the reaſon in the World to conclude ſo. Not only from the preſent Depravity of Humane Nature in general; but from ſeveral Inſtances, recorded in Scripture, of like wonderful Appearances, without any viſible Succeſs. Was the Glory of God's Preſence manifeſted, and a Voice from Heaven uttered, to warn St. *Paul*, who Jeſus was, and how neceſſary Obedience to him is? Such glorious Light was ſeen, Such miraculous Voice was heard, by the Jews, at our Lord's Baptiſm by *John*, and yet, among that Multitude of Hearers and Spectators, we read not of one Convert made by Either. Was St. *Paul* ſtruck down to the Ground by the Power of Jeſus? So were the Soldiers, who came to apprehend him in the Garden; and They, 'tis plain, perſiſted in their wicked Purpoſe notwithſtanding. *Laſtly*, Was He ſmitten with Blindneſs for three Days? *Elymas* the Sorcerer was ſo for a much longer time; Who hath left us however no ground to believe, that he did not ſtill continue *full of all Subtlety and all Malice, a Child of the Devil, and an Enemy of all Righteouſneſs.* Now, what Account are we able to give ourſelves, why the ſame Events, though all plainly miraculous, ſhould have ſo different Effects, but only This; that in Some they were made ſucceſsful, by thoſe ſecret and Divine Influences from above, which the All-wiſe God, for juſt Reaſons known to himſelf, was not pleaſed to afford to Others? So certain it is, that He is the Author and Finiſher of all that is good in us: And, that no external

Matt. iii. 16, 17.

John xviii. 6.

Acts xiii. 10, 11.

ternal Remedies or Helps, how powerful or affecting ſoever they may ſeem in their own Nature, can take place, or anſwer our Purpoſes, or our Wants; except the Heart and Will be prepared and moved, and the outward Application be ſeconded and ſet home, by the Internal Workings of Grace upon the Soul.

But we have not done Juſtice to the Virtues of this Apoſtle, till it hath been obſerved, *Secondly*, How far He was inſtrumental in his own Converſion; and what pious Diſpoſitions the Hiſtory takes notice of, which might incline, and render him a proper Object for, ſo wonderful a Mercy.

Now the Temper and Deportment, ſuited to the ſeveral Steps of this Proceeding, are really admirable; and ſuch as abundantly declare the Probity of his Mind, by the manner of bringing him to a Change of his Meaſures.

The Awful Reverence expreſs'd at the firſt Diſplay of our Lord's Glory; The ready Submiſſion to his Call; The entire Reſignation of himſelf to his Conduct in that noble Queſtion, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* The ſevere Mortification of a three Day's Faſt, The fervent Prayers, and all the Teſtimonies of a ſorrowful Penitence during that time; The devout Engagement in the Profeſſion of Chriſt's Religion, by Baptiſm received at the Hands of *Ananias*; The many Evidences of a generous and excellent Spirit, which ſo ſpeedily, and ſo thoroughly, vanquiſhed the Prejudices of Education; and went ſo reſolutely into the Service of the lately hated and perſecuted Name of *Jeſus*, even when expreſly forewarned, how great things he muſt ſuffer for his ſake: The being content to enter upon a new Courſe, directly oppoſite to his former Opinions and Practices; and to encounter the Scoffs and the Malice of his Friends and Country-men, which would naturally be more provoked and implacable, in proportion to the Eagerneſs of his Zeal, once

exerted the quite contrary way: Theſe are ſuch Inſtances of Sincerity and Piety, as have no Parallel in Story. Such as undeniably prove, that Humour, and Obſtinacy, Party, and Intereſt, and the World, had no part, either in his Errors, or his Converſion. They are ſuch, as give immortal Luſtre to his Character, and render the happy gaining of this Apoſtle ſcarcely more wonderful on God's part, than commendable and virtuous on his Own.

What was ſaid in the Cloſe of my *Laſt* Particular, may ſuffice ſo to explain This, that, in magnifying the Compliance of St. *Paul*, I may not be thought in any Degree to derogate from the Grace of God. It was under the conſtant Influence and Conduct of This Grace, that every ſtep of the good Work was taken. To this was owing the generous Probity of his Mind; By This his every good Inclination was excited; By This he was convinced, enlightened, eſtabliſhed, and perfected. But ſtill, I conceive, in ſuch a Way, as made the Actions His, though the Glory of them continued to be God's: That is, They were Voluntary and Rewardable in St. *Paul*; who very emphatically ſays of himſelf, that *he was not diſobedient to the heavenly Viſion.* A hard and ſeemingly arrogant Expreſſion, if that Obedience were the Effect of abſolute Neceſſity and Force irreſiſtible: But very well conſiſtent with, and well-becoming, ſuch a Concurrence of the Will, as was wrought by moſt powerful Aſſiſtances of Grace within, no leſs than by the moſt miraculous Evidences of Truth from without.

Acts xxvi. 19.

I ſhould now proceed to the *Laſt* thing propoſed, and conſider ſuch other paſſages in the Service of the Day, as deſcribe St. *Paul*'s Behaviour after his Converſion. But ſo much as is needful of this kind, will preſently occur to my Reader, in my following Treatiſe upon the Goſpel for this Feſtival.

All

All I add here ſhall conſiſt in a Reflection or Two, more immediately relating to the Subject now in hand.

As *Firſt*: The Example before us furniſhes a good Rule, for judging of our own, or of other People's Zeal. It ſhews the Poſſibility of being under ſtrong Prepoſſeſſions, exceeding vehement for grievous Errors, furiouſly bent againſt thoſe of a different Judgment, and yet, that all this may be conſiſtent with Honeſty and a good Meaning. And, Ought we not to learn from hence to enlarge our Charity, by forbearing to cenſure even our Adverſaries, nay even our Perſecutors, as Wretches loſt to all Integrity and Conſcience? Such Sentences are too often barbarous and unjuſt, and, in St. *Paul*'s Caſe, had been manifeſtly falſe. And doubtleſs we ſhould do more real Service to God and our Cauſe, by believing the beſt, hoping almoſt againſt Hope, pitying the Ignorance, patiently contending with the Prejudices, and praying for the Pardon and Amendment of the Faults and furious Oppoſitions of Contradicters and Perſecutors; than by raſhly impleading their Integrity, pronouncing their Intentions wicked, and accounting them all to be the Children of Hypocriſy and Hell.

2. But the ſame Example, which perſuades ſuch Tenderneſs in judging Others, is a very good Argument for being exceeding nice and ſevere in judging Our Selves. Men are too frequently impoſed upon by ſpecious Appearances of Zeal; and think thereby not only to excuſe, but even to ſanctify, many unwarrantable Actions. Whereas, would they bring theſe to St. *Paul*'s Standard, the Difference would ſoon be found between that, which is really a Zeal for God, and that, which affects to paſs for it. For, if Men will not be brought fairly to conſider; If they ſtick pertinaciouſly to their Point, and refuſe to ſubmit to all Methods of Conviction; If, upon Conviction, they do not effectually diſengage themſelves from ſuch Prepoſſeſſions, as can no longer be juſtified;

juſtified; If the ſame affectionate and vigorous Deſires do not appear, in favour of Truth lately diſcovered, as were uſed to exert themſelves for beloved and inveterate Errors: Theſe Perſons have none of thoſe Marks to ſhew, which proved St. *Paul*'s Sincerity; and Miſtaken Zeal is too tender a Name in ſuch Caſes. And it ought to be remember'd, that One, in much better Circumſtances, who had no Partiality or indirect Ends to be ſuſpected of, did yet ſtyle himſelf *Blaſphemer, Injurious, and Chief of Sinners*, for even thoſe very things, which he did ignorantly, and *verily thought* himſelf *obliged to do, againſt the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth.*

Laſtly, Let us admire and extol the Wiſdom of Almighty God, for the mighty Advantages, which the Chriſtian Religion received by the Converſion of this Apoſtle in particular. For, (as an ancient Father well repreſents it) "Who was "*Paul?* Once a Perſecutor, but now a "Preacher of Chriſt. And what made "this Change? Was he brought over? Alas! there "was no body diſpoſed to bribe him to it. No, It "was, becauſe he ſaw Chriſt, was convinced, and "worſhipped, and was caught up into Heaven. He "took his Journey to *Damaſcus*, that he might perſe-"cute; and after three Days did there commence "Preacher. And with what Power! Others, in mat-"ters concerning themſelves, produce the Teſtimony "of their own Friends and Retainers; But I produce "a Witneſs, who was once an Enemy. And can any "Doubt ſtick with you after this? The Evidence of "*Peter* and *John* are of great weight, 'tis true; But "a Man, diſpoſed to be jealous, might object, that "theſe were Companions and Servants. But can any "one queſtion the Truth of His Evidence, who firſt "was a profeſs'd Enemy to *Jeſus*, and afterwards died "for him? I have, for my part, always admi-"red the wiſe Management of the Holy Ghoſt on this "Occaſion,

Cyril. Hieroſol. Catech. xi. Sect. 3. Edit. Oxon.

" Occaſion, in ordering, that the Epiſtles written by " Others ſhould be few, but *Paul*'s, the late Perſecu- " tor, no leſs than Fourteen. Not that *Peter* or *John* " were inferior to *Paul*; but becauſe His were more " likely to perſuade. And accordingly we read, *All that heard him were amazed, and ſaid, Is not this he that deſtroyed them which called on this Name in Jeruſalem, and came hither for that Intent, that he might bring them bound unto the Chief Prieſts? But now he preacheth the Faith which once he deſtroyed. And they glorified God in Him.* To the ſame God let us alſo give Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The GOSPEL.

St. Matth. xix. 27. PARAPHRASE.

27. *PEter anſwered and ſaid unto Jeſus, Behold, we have forſaken all, and followed thee: what ſhall we have therefore?*

28. *And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the ſon of man ſhall ſit in the throne of his glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael.* See the Comment,

29. *And every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or land for my name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlaſting life.*

30. *But many that are firſt, ſhall be laſt; and the laſt ſhall be firſt.*

COMMENT.

THE Occaſion of this Diſcourſe between our Bleſſed Saviour and St. *Peter*, was adminiſtred by that Rich Young Man, Who is ſaid, in this foregoing part of this Chapter, to have rejected a Promiſe of Treaſure in Heaven, when clogged with the Condition of abandoning his Poſſeſſions upon Earth. That Refuſal moved our Lord to make a Reflection (very ſurpriſing *Ver.* 16, &c. *Ver.* 24, &c.

to

to all that heard it) upon the great Danger of Riches, and the fatal Obſtruction they ordinarily prove, to ſuch a Reſignation of Mind, as true Piety, and the Virtues of a Chriſtian State, imply and require. From that Obſervation, St. *Peter* takes the Advan-
Ver. 27. tage of magnifying that voluntary Renunciation of the World, of which He and his Brethren had ſet an Example. Inſinuating withal, that ſome very great and glorious Recompence muſt certainly be reſerved, for ſo uncommon an Inſtance of Heavenly-mindedneſs. To this our Lord agrees, in
Ver. 28, 29. a Prediction of peculiar Honours intended for the Apoſtles; Which I ſhall have a fit
Goſp. for St. Barthol. Opportunity to conſider hereafter: But
Ver. 30. he adds a Proverbial Aphoriſm, whereof I ſhall at preſent chooſe to treat; Becauſe in It chiefly I conceive the Matter to be couched, which renders the Paſſage, now before us, a Subject proper to be choſen for the Goſpel of this Feſtival.

All, that would otherwiſe have been neceſſary for explaining what is meant by the *Firſt being Laſt, and the Laſt Firſt*, hath been already ſaid at
Goſp. for Septuageſ. Sund. *Vol. II.* large; when the following Parable concerning the Labourers in the Vineyard, by which this Sentence is illuſtrated, came under Conſideration. My manner therefore of handling it at preſent ſhall be,

I. To enforce ſome Practical Doctrines, which our Bleſſed Maſter ſeems to have intended his Diſciples ſhould gather from thence. Then

II. From an Example, anſwering to each Branch of it, to ſhew, how proper and ſeaſonable Truths thoſe were, for the Apoſtles to be put in mind of. And

III. *Laſtly*, To make ſuch Application of theſe Doctrines and Examples, as may be ſuitable to the Day.

I. I begin with ſome Doctrines and Practical Reflections, naturally reſulting from this Sentence.

1. Now

1. Now One of theſe I take to be; That all the outward Advantages of Life, moſt valued and admired by the generality of Mankind, are not in the ſame Eſteem with almighty God. And the plain Reaſon is, becauſe nothing is of any Account with him, but inward Holineſs and Virtue, which Theſe of themſelves cannot effect. For, it is plain, we are not one whit the purer or better for them. It is the Glory of Religion, to be calculated for all Sorts and Conditions of Men. And it will one Day greatly aggravate the Condemnation of the Wicked, that, As no Circumſtances of Perſon or Fortune can make us Good, without our own Care and Pains; So neither can any render it impracticable, for Them to be Virtuous and Good, who are well reſolved, and ſeriouſly diſpoſed to it. The Antient Philoſophers have therefore very pertinently ſtyled the things of this nature *Inſtruments of Life*. For, like all other Inſtruments, they do nothing of themſelves, but depend entirely upon the Hand of the Artificer: And every thing they are employed about, will be well or ill finiſhed, according to the Skill or the Ignorance, the Neglect or the due Application, of the Perſon, under whoſe Direction they fall.

This is manifeſtly the Caſe with Riches, and Authority, and Knowledge, and the Reſt of them.

For Riches (*Firſt*;) How manifold are the Benefits of a plentiful Eſtate, and how publick a Bleſſing may the Poſſeſſor of it become to his Own, and to future Ages, provided he have the Soul to make a right uſe of it? If his Heart and his Hands be open to the diſtreſſed Members of Chriſt; What ſtately Habitations, what bright and incorruptible Crowns may ſo fading a Treaſure enſure, by refreſhing their Bowels, and covering their Nakedneſs? But if this ſhall be made, in the very worſt and moſt literal Senſe of the Words, The *Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs*; If a Man reſolve to get it, though by Means never ſo unjuſt; and will keep it,

though by a Management never ſo ſordid; If the Sufferings of the Afflicted, and the Cries of Widows and Orphans can be ſeen and heard without any Impreſſion; If he ſo far *make Gold his God, and the fine Gold his Confidence*, as to place his Affections and Happineſs there; Then the Wealth, which might have procured his Exaltation, proves his Snare and certain Downfal. And of ſuch as Theſe it is, that the Rich young Man gave Occaſion for ſaying, *A rich Man ſhall hardly enter into the Kingdom of God.* And again, *It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* So juſtly is the Obſervation I am now upon, deduced from the Paſſage in hand; In regard the Conference with that Young Man, and the Remarks of our Bleſſed Lord upon his ill Conduct, drew on the whole of this Day's Goſpel, which relates what paſs'd between him and St. *Peter*, after ſo extraordinary an Experiment of the Influence Riches have.

Ver. 23, 24.

The ſame muſt be acknowledged moſt true, concerning Reputation, and Honour, and Authority. For, What are Theſe, but ſo much Power to do good; if They, who have it, will exert that Power, by leading their Inferiors into Virtue, who are generally diſpoſed to follow Perſons of Eminence and Eſteem? But, if Such ſhall degenerate into mean Deſigns and popular Vices, if they ſet up for Patrons of Irreligion, and encourage Wickedneſs by great Examples; What Hopes can be entertained, what Miſchiefs may not be feared, from Conſciences ſo profligate and enſlaved? This courting the Opinion of others, at the Expence of their Character and their Duty, is elſewhere alledged, as the Cauſe, that detained the Scribes and Phariſees in their obſtinate Infidelity. *How can ye believe*, ſays our Lord, *who receive and ſeek Honour one of another, and ſeek not that Honour which cometh from God only?*

John v. 44.

But

But of all worldly Advantages Knowledge ſure is the moſt truly Manly and Deſirable. And of all Knowledge, that which hath more immediately Religion and our Duty for its Object. Yet even This, which may ſeem ſo directly to carry us to our proper Happineſs, is ſometimes the Occaſion of greater Perverſeneſs in Error and Miſery. This appeared moſt evidently at the firſt ſetting out of the Goſpel. The Honourable and Wealthy, nay the reputed Wiſer and Better-prepared, were not only ſlower in Embracing it, but more violent in oppoſing its Progreſs, than thoſe of meaner Condition and Attainments. So was it with the Apoſtle of this Day in particular. The Reaſon of all which is one and the ſame; namely, That every Temporal Advantage is capable of an Ill, no leſs than of a good Uſe: And, where things may be turn'd either way, the Corruption of Humane Nature is extremely apt to turn them the worſe way.

2. Another neceſſary Inſtruction, which our Lord ſeems to have intended from theſe Words, is, That good Beginnings are of no ſervice, except Care be taken to bring them to Perfection. Such Beginnings have indeed their juſt Value and Commendation; But this chiefly depends upon the Hopes we conceive, that what is begun well, will not fail to be finiſhed ſo. For no Virtue is ſafe, without a Diſpoſition to all Virtue; nor any Crown to be attained, without Stedfaſtneſs and Perſeverance. It is in the Chriſtian, as in every other Race; He that is beaten out at the laſt Heat, loſes the Honour and the Prize, as certainly, as if he had ſet out inglorioufly, and never run well at all. Of This alſo the Example of the Rich Young Man gave but too ſenſible an Experiment. For He, who had made the Moral Law his conſtant Study and Practice, and *kept all the* Commandments *from his Youth up*; Nay, who was very zealous, and aſpiring after yet higher Degrees of Virtue, did yet never arrive to a com- *Ver.* 20.

plete Good Man; but gave out diſhonourably, and forfeited all, at the laſt Propoſal of giving up the Treaſures of This World, in exchange for thoſe of a Better. So neceſſary it is, for every Man to be thoroughly reſolved, to keep the Goal continually in his Eye, and, from this Proſpect, to be quickened with the Shame and Danger of a Relapſe. The conſtant Remembrance of all Undertakings being crown'd by the End, would ſpur us on; and we ſhould do and ſuffer any thing in our great Concern, rather than ſuffer ourſelves to loſe our paſt Pains, by proving at laſt but *almoſt Chriſtians*. For ſurely the bittereſt Remorſe to a Guilty loſt Wretch muſt needs be that of falling back into Hell, from the very Confines and Gate of Heaven. Theſe I take to be Practical Obſervations, very naturally reſulting from the Former Clauſe of our Bleſſed Lord's Aphoriſm, that *Many who are Firſt ſhall be Laſt*.

3. There is a *Third*, which offers itſelf to us from the Latter Clauſe, that *the Laſt ſhall be Firſt*. And that is, A mighty Encouragement to all ſuch, as, either through want of a good Education, or Neglect to improve it afterwards, have not made the ſame proſperous Beginnings, or not the ſame careful Advances, in Piety, with their Brethren. This is in truth a deplorable, but by no means a deſperate Caſe. For there is room ſtill left for Induſtry and Zeal; and a poſſibility of thoſe *Laſt*, with regard to Time and other Advantages, becoming *Firſt* in the Degrees of Acceptance and Reward. This much ſeems plainly repreſented by the following Parable: In which the Labourers called to the Work at different Hours of the Day, were, notwithſtanding, all made even at Night; And the very Lateſt, who had wrought but One Hour, were eſteem'd not unworthy of the ſame Wages, with thoſe hired at the earlieſt Hour of the Morning. This Diſpenſation, 'tis true, as figured there, appears to imply, both a ready Compliance with the firſt Offer, and an extraordinary Application upon the

the cloſing with it. The different Circumſtances under which Jews and Gentiles came into the Goſpel, are, without Controverſy, the primary Intention of that Parable. But, ſince God hath ſolemnly engaged, that *When*, or (as our old Service-Book reads,) *at what time ſoever the wicked Man turns from his Wickedneſs, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive:* Ezek. xviii. 27. I cannot think any Violence or Wrong done to this Paſſage, by ſaying, That it likewiſe adminiſters Comfort and great Hope, to Them who, even in the midſt of Light, have continued under the Power of Darkneſs and Error, and *held the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs.* Let Theſe then be perſuaded to begin, though late, to live well, worthy of, and ſuitably to, their Opportunities; and Their Repentance ſhall not be rejected. But let them remember withal, that this Parable always ſuppoſes ſome Space ſtill left to work in. One Hour of the Day at leaſt; wherein the Labour may be ſo vigorous, as to fetch up, and in ſome meaſure to make Amends for, long and many Neglects. If by ſuch Proportion of Life, ſo remaining, and ſo employed, their After-Care approves the Sincerity of their Converſion, it can never come unſeaſonably. For, even in this Senſe alſo, They who labour vigorouſly, though they have ſtood almoſt all the Day idle, ſhall find, that their *Labour is not in vain the Lord.*

Such are the Practical Doctrines, which we may reaſonably preſume this Paſſage was deſigned to ſuggeſt. Let it now be obſerved in the

II. *Second* place, How very proper and ſeaſonable Theſe were, for the Apoſtles to be put in mind of at that time. It hath been already ſaid, that the Occaſion of this Sentence was adminiſtred by an invidious Compariſon, made by St. *Peter*, in favour of himſelf and his Brethren: Who, much unlike to the Young Man ſpoken of before, had diſtinguiſh'd their Love

and Obedience to Chriſt, by *forſaking All, and following Him.* Now, amidſt this Sufficiency and Self-Satisfaction, it was very requiſite to let them underſtand, that, As God had a juſt regard to thoſe Virtues, which one Day ſhould exalt them in his Heavenly Kingdom, far above thoſe Rich, and Great, and Worldly-wiſe, who were *firſt*, as to the Accompliſhments and Advantages of the preſent Life; So they were to remember, that the moſt laudable Beginnings are but Beginnings: That the Reward does not become due, till the Work and the Day be ended: And, as theſe Advances, if proportionably carried on, would entitle them to a juſt Pre-eminence above common Chriſtians; ſo, if their Fidelity ſhould warp, or their Zeal cool hereafter, this would check and diſappoint their Hopes, and greatly abate, or utterly deſtroy, their faireſt Proſpects.

Again, Allowing their Piety never ſo firm, and their Elevation ſuch, as is fitly reſembled by *ſitting upon Thrones*; Yet ought they not to imagine thoſe Honours and Diſtinctions ſo peculiarly Theirs, that none, but the Attendants upon Chriſt's own Perſon, could be qualified to attain them. For God can, when he pleaſes, at any time raiſe up ſuch Inſtruments of his own Glory and the Salvation of Mankind; that their Labours, and Conſtancy, and Sufferings, ſhall make large Amends for any other Circumſtances, which might be thought a leſſening of their Character. And ſo theſe *Laſt*, in that reſpect, may become *Firſt*. They may equal, I mean, if not exceed, thoſe Apoſtles themſelves, in the Good they do, and in the Recompence they ſhall receive at the Hand of God for it. For Both theſe Caſes there were, ſhortly after, Two eminent Inſtances, ſo wonderful in their kind, and ſo awakening to theſe Apoſtles, that a Man may fairly preſume our Lord to have had them in view: And thus to have foretold, not only what ſhould be done to all the World in general, but what ſhould

Ver. 28.

be

be the Condition of thoſe Two Perſons in particular.

The Former of theſe is *Judas.* Choſen into the higheſt and moſt honourable Order; Admitted to the conſtant Converſation of his bleſſed Maſter; One, who daily heard the Divine Inſtructions, by which he enlightened the Ignorant, encouraged the Honeſt and Willing, ſilenced the Gain-ſayers, and put the Obſtinate and Malicious to Confuſion: One, who had the moſt ſenſible Demonſtrations of his Power and Glory; Equal, in all external Privileges, to the reſt of that noble Fraternity, who exalted the Name and Kingdom of their Lord, and carried his Croſs triumphantly round the World: Wanting no Qualification to equal their Virtue and Renown too; except that which he was wanting to himſelf in, an honeſt and good Heart. Yet did this Man at length prove a *Devil*, a Betrayer, and Murtherer. His Name is a Reproach and a By-word to all Ages and Nations; And of Him is declared, that he was the *Son of Perdition*, and that *good were it for him, if he had never been born.* So far are the greateſt Privileges from ſecuring any Man's Happineſs and Salvation, without the Continuance of God's Grace, and that of his own Care and Perſeverance. So ſeaſonable was this Check to the Confidence of theſe Apoſtles; When, even of their own Number, ſo dreadful an Example would quickly be made, of a Man, *Firſt* in the Opportunities of being good and happy above common Believers, but made *Laſt* by his own Fault.

Joh. vi. 70.

John xvii. 12. Matt. xxvi. 24.

As viſibly was the Latter Branch of this Sentence made good, in that Saint, whoſe wonderful Converſion the Church, this Day commemorating, hath, upon that account, very fitly appointed the Scripture before us to bear a part in that Service. For, What could be more contrary to Chriſt and his Kingdom, What in all Humane Appearance more deſperate and loſt, What more

more diſtant from an Apoſtle and Martyr, than the injurious, the blaſpheming, the perſecuting *Saul?* And yet, Behold and admire the merciful Providence of God, and the amazing Power of his Grace! In the midſt of all this Spight and Fury; In the very Execution of thoſe bloody Commiſſions, mention'd in the Offices for this Day: This violent miſtaken Man was on the ſudden enlightened, confounded, ſoftened, by a Viſion and Voice from Heaven. Thus checked, he employs his Journey to *Damaſcus*, to Purpoſes moſt foreign from thoſe it had been undertaken for. He becomes one of the Converts to a Religion, which he came to vex and perſecute: And all the eager Zeal, whereby Men before were *compelled to blaſpheme*, ist urned on the ſide of the Truth; exerted in every Motive, that Eloquence, joined with Example, could inſpire, for prevailing with his Hearers to *count all things but Dross and Dung, ſo they might win Chriſt*; and generouſly to deſpiſe the Troubles and Terrors, of which himſelf had been hitherto the dreadful Inſtrument, and mercileſs Inflicter.

Phil. iii. 8.

The Holy Indignation he conceived againſt his former Practices, the admirable Meekneſs and Humility of his Deportment, And yet, at the ſame time, the invincible Patience and Reſolution of his Mind, The indefatigable Diligence in Preaching, in Diſputing, in Writing; The Strength of his Arguments, The Charms of his Rhetorick, The winning Prudence of his Addreſs and Condeſcenſion, and Painfulneſs and Hazards of his Travels, The undaunted Courage before Kings and Governors, in Threatenings and Dangers, in Chains and Courts of Juſtice, and the vaſt Account in theſe turned to for the Advancement of Religion, are never to be deſcribed, ſcarce ought to be attempted, by any Pen or Tongue, leſs Divine than that of St *Paul* himſelf. Obſerve therefore, what Character he gives of his own Miniſtry. *Scourged of the Jews*, to the utmoſt

moſt Extremity their Law would allow, *five* ſeveral *time*; *thrice beaten with Rods, once ſtoned, thrice in Shipwracks, a Night and a Day in the deep*; *In journeyings often, in perils of Waters, in perils by Robbers, in perils by his own Countrymen, in perils by the Heathens, in perils in the City, in peril in the Wilderneſs, in perils in the Sea, in perils by falſe Brethren: In wearineſs and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold and nakedneſs*; And beſides all theſe, (which to be ſure was by no mean the leaſt Article of his Sufferings) *the Care of all the Churches:* A Fellow-feeling of the Infirmities and Afflictions of the Saints, which could not but be a very tender Concern, and daily Oppreſſion upon ſo affectionate a Paſtor. Thus, He, who declares himſelf once *the Chief of Sinners, in that he perſecuted the Church of God*, became its Glory and moſt ſhining Light. He, who was *not meet to be called an Apoſtle*, came *in no wiſe behind the very chiefeſt Apoſtles*, but *laboured* and endured *more abundantly than they all:* Obtained equal Favour with God; was *caught up into the third Heavens*, was taught myſterious Truths by immediate Revelation; and after infinite Toils, and Sufferings, and prodigious Succeſſes, glorified the Lord Jeſus, by ſhedding his own Blood; and offering his Life a moſt willing Sacrifice, in Vindication of that Truth, for the Confeſſion whereof he, with ſuch outrageous Eagerneſs, haſtened to ſpill the Blood of all that ſhould dare to avow it. So eminent an Example is He, above any other in the Chriſtian Hiſtory, of our Saviour's Affirmation, that the *Laſt* ſhould be *Firſt*.

2 Cor. xi. 24, &c.

1 Tim. i. 15.

1 Cor. xv. 10.

1 Cor. xii. 1.

It remains only now, that I conclude this Diſcourſe with Two ſhort Inferences, ſuitable to the Subject I have been upon, and the Occaſion of this Feſtival.

1. Now

1. Now, that *Many who are firſt, ſhall be laſt*, ought to be a warning to all thoſe, who have had the Happineſs of Inſtruction, imbibed good Principles early, and made proportionable Improvements; that they do not depart from the way in which they have been train'd, nor ſuffer their Latter End to be worſe than their Beginning. It ſhould alſo prove an effectual Prevention to all thoſe intemperate Over-valuings of our own Virtue; than which no other Temptations are more likely to deſtroy it, by betraying us into Spiritual Pride and Security. How well aware was our Great Apoſtle of this Rock? How careful to admoniſh Others of the Danger of ſplitting upon it? The vain Confidences of his converted Gentiles at *Rome* he takes down, with *Be not high-minded, but fear; For if God ſpared not the natural Branches*, the Jews; *take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee.* The falſely preſumed Indefectibility of his *Corinthians* he confutes, from the Example of God's Dealings under the Old Teſtament: and leaves this Advice upon thoſe, who depended too far upon the Privileges of the New, *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall.* His *Philippians* he inſtructs, that the *Salvation* of a Chriſtian *is to be wrought out with Fear and Trembling*; And therefore declares, that he *counts not himſelf to have apprehended already*, but that, in order to it, he *kept on continually preſſing forward to the Mark*; as being duly ſenſible, that ſuch only, who *continue faithful unto the end*, can have reaſonable Hopes of receiving *a Crown of Life.*

Rom. xi. 20, 21.

1 Cor. x. 12.

Phil. ii. 12.

Chap. iii. 13, 14.

Rev. ii. 10.

2. As our Lord's Declaration, that *the Laſt ſhall be Firſt*, is a gracious Intimation of Mercy on God's part; So is the Example inſiſted on from it a good Direction, what is fit and neceſſary on Our Part, in order to ſuch Advancement. That very large Abatements in the Account of paſt Faults, and liberal Allowances for Paſſi-

ons,

ons, and Infirmities, and Miſtakes, are made by our great Maſter and Judge, Men are forward enough to infer, from the Example of St. *Paul:* And they ſo far reaſon juſtly. But then they would do well to proceed a ſtep or two farther; and to obſerve, from the ſame Example, to what ſort of Perſons ſuch marvellous Grace is extended: That they are ſuch, as He was. They that bewail and forſake their paſt Faults; that ſee, and are humbled with a Senſe of them; that conflict with, and, to the beſt of their Ability, ſubdue, their Paſſions and Infirmities. Hence again we learn, That late Penitents, when truly and effectually ſuch, will double their Diligence, fetch up the time they have loſt, and by an uncommon Piety and Zeal, teſtify the Sincerity of their Converſion, and the thankful Eſteem they have of it. In a word, that nothing will be more at the Heart of ſuch Men, than making Reparation to the World for any paſt Offences given; and not only wiping out the Scandal of a Bad Example, but exerting all the Power and Luſtre of an eminently Good one.

To all which Purpoſes I know not what better expedient to adviſe, than a devout Compliance with the Church in the Solemnity of this Day; by endeavouring to make the Apoſtle of it more and more our Pattern, from lively Remembrances of his Converſion and following Life. Both theſe are moſt deſervedly commemorated by the Church in general, becauſe an invaluable Bleſſing to all the Chriſtian World. But more particularly ſo to Us of this Nation, whoſe once blind and barbarous Region was moſt probably enlightened by His Preſence and Miniſtry in *Britain*.

Let us therefore beg moſt earneſtly of God to *Give us his Grace*, and labour, (as the Church hath taught us to pray) *that we may ſhew forth our Thankfulneſs, by following the holy Doctrines which he taught.* So ſhall we at laſt obtain the *Crown of Righteouſneſs, laid up,* *Collect.* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

not

not for Him only, but for all them, who, like Him ſerve the *Lord Jeſus*, and *love his appearing*.

To Whom, with the Father, and Holy Spirit, Three Perſons and One God, be all Honour and Glory for evermore.

The Preſentation of Chriſt in the Temple, commonly called The Purification of St. MARY *the Virgin.*

The COLLECT.

ALmighty and Everlivng God, we humbly beſeech thy Majeſty, that, as thy only begotten Son was this Day* preſented in the Temple in Subſtance of our Fleſh, ſo we may be preſented unto thee with pure and clean Hearts, by the ſame thy Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

* Luke ii, 22.

The EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE.

Mal. iii. 1.

1. The wicked Reflections made by ſome (*Ch.* ii. 17.) ſhall be proved to have no ground. For, notwithſtanding Miracles and other Prophets ceaſe, yet I will in due time ſend One, more than any Prophet, even *John Baptiſt*, as a Harbinger before me; And the Meſſiah ſhall be ſeen in his Temple: Even He, who is your general Expectation and Joy, and in whom the Covenant of Grace is ratified.

1. *BEhold I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his Temple: even the meſſenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.*

2. But that coming of his will be a very trying time, and make plain Diſtinctions between the Wicked and Righteous, the Hypocritical and Sincere.

2. *But who may abide the day of his coming? and who ſhall ſtand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's ſope.*

3. Thus ſhall he by his Doctrine, at his firſt Coming, purify Men from their Droſs, and qualify them for ſerving God acceptably, by an offering, the Uſe whereof ſhall never be aboliſhed.

3. *And he ſhall ſit as a refiner and purifier of ſilver: and he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi, and purge them as gold and ſilver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs.*

4. *Then*

4. *Then ſhall the offering of Judah and Jeruſalem be pleaſant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.*

4. The Services and Devotions of his Church ſhall then be pure and acceptable, as any that ever were offered up by the holieſt Patriarchs, or pureſt Ages of Worſhippers heretofore.

5. *And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a ſwift witneſs againſt the ſorcerers, and againſt the adulterers, and againſt falſe ſwearers, and againſt thoſe that oppreſs the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherleſs, and that turn aſide the ſtranger from his right, and fear not me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.*

5. Of all which, ſo ſtrict an Account ſhall be taken, and Puniſhment ſo exemplary inflicted on the Wicked and Profane; that none ſhall then have Occaſion to ſay, as ſome now ſcoffingly do, (*Chap.* ii. 17.)

Where is the God of Judgment?

COMMENT.

WHAT Differences ſoever the Jews, or other Infidels may make in the Interpretation of this Prophecy; Chriſtians, who acknowledge the Authority of the New Teſtament, can remain under no reaſonable Doubt, to whom it ſhould be applied. The very Words are quoted by Three ſeveral Evangeliſts. And the Meſſenger, mentioned here to go before the Face of the Lord, is, by our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, declared to be *John* the Baptiſt. This is the Fore-runner, referred to in the 4th Chapter, under the Title of *Elias*; and (as hath been largely proved heretofore) means, not the very Perſon of that Prophet; but One, whoſe Reſemblance to His Character and Circumſtances was Reaſon ſufficient, for foretelling him under that Name.

Mark i. 2. Matt. xi. 10, 11. Luke vii. 27.

Matt. xi. 13, 14. ---xvii. 12, 13.

Luke i. 17. *comp.* Malac. iv. 5.

See Goſp. for iv. *Sunday in* Advent. *Vol.* I.

As little ground can any one have, who conſiders the Scriptures here referred to, to queſtion, whether the Lord, whoſe Face this Meſſenger was ſent before, be the Meſſiah. But in regard the Scriptures take notice of a Two-fold Coming of the Meſſiah; It cannot but be proper to enquire, Whether of thoſe Two may be

be concern'd in this Prediction. The rather, becauſe ſome Paſſages before us have been thought a very lively Deſcription of ſome Circumſtances, with which, we are elſewhere informed, his Second ſhall be attended; but not ſo naturally to belong to thoſe of his Firſt Coming.

Such in particular are That Queſtion, *Who may abide the Day of his Coming*, or be able to ſtand *when he appeareth?* The comparing him to a *Refiner's Fire, and Fuller's Sope:* The Deſcription of his *ſitting like a Refiner, and Purifier of Silver*, And the threatening, that he ſhall *come to Judgment* and *be a ſwift Witneſs* againſt ſeveral enormous Crimes, ſpecified in the cloſe of the Scripture now before us.

Ver. 2.

Ver. 3.

Ver. 5.

But, All this notwithſtanding, I ſuppoſe it will be look'd upon as ſufficient Evidence, for this Prophecy relating to the Meſſiah's firſt Advent, if it can be made appear, (1.)That even theſe Paſſages are very applicable to This Coming; and Then, that they ſtand intermix'd with ſome Others, which muſt needs belong to This only.

1. *Firſt* therefore, I ſhall endeavour to prove, that even thoſe Paſſages already mentioned, which ſeem moſt to incline to Chriſt's Second, are very applicable to his Former Coming.

By the Day and Coming of Chriſt we are to underſtand, not only his Appearance to the World, but all the memorable Changes and Events, to which that Appearance ſhould miniſter Occaſion. Hence ſome Interpreters have apply'd thoſe Phraſes here which ſpeak of *Purifying* and *Refining*, to the Doctrine and Grace of Chriſt. Both which, it is plain, meet with Mankind, in a Condition, but too like a mix'd Maſs embaſed with great Quantities of Droſs; Or like a Garment ſullied with many filthy Stains. To theſe the Word and the Spirit perform the Offices of *Fire* and

Sope,

Sope, by ſeparating the Refuſe from the Good; and purging out thoſe Spots, which have been contracted by Natural Infirmities, or Evil Cuſtoms. The Word is ſerviceable to theſe Purpoſes, by inſtructing us how, and why, this cleanſing muſt be made: And the Grace attending a right uſe of that Word is ſo, by diſpoſing the Mind to follow ſuch Inſtruction, and conveying ſuch Strength againſt Frailties and Temptations, as may enable Men to make that Change effectually. But theſe Advantages are manifeſtly owing, The One to the Preaching and Inſtitution, The Other to the Merit and Power, of Chriſt, at his Firſt Appearance; and may therefore be fitly imply'd (as Effects in their Cauſe) by that Coming, and that Day of His.

Thus again our Lord may be ſaid to *come to Judgment* againſt the ſeveral ſorts of Criminals, mentioned at the 5th Verſe; As thoſe Sins are more expreſly condemn'd; As the Account, which Men muſt expect to render for them is more fully declared; And as the Eternity of thoſe Puniſhments in a future State, to which the guilty Committers render themſelves obnoxious, is made more manifeſt by the Doctrine of the Goſpel, than it ever had been before. For This deſtroys all thoſe falſe Confidences, which wicked People are ſo apt to ſupport themſelves withal; and gives fair warning, that (any promiſcuous Diſtributions of Providence in the preſent ſtate of things, any Impunity or Proſperity here below notwithſtanding) God hath reſerved to himſelf a future and ſevere Reckoning; and will not fail, at his own appointed time, to *repay Sinners to their Face.*

But if This Interpretation be agreeable to the Doctrine of Chriſt, conſidered it itſelf; It is much more ſo, when we take into the Argument the particular Circumſtances of planting and propagating that Doctrine. Now theſe are ſufficiently known to have been ſo calamitous, that the Afflictions and Perſecutions, to

which

which every Believer was expoſed for the ſake of his Profeſſion, did prove a ſevere Trial of his Sincerity and Zeal. Hence it is, that we find *taking up our Croſs* ſo often inſiſted upon, as a neceſſary Qualification of becoming Chriſt's Diſciples: Hence, that neceſſary Advice to act in this Matter, like wiſe Warriors, and provident Builders, by making before-hand a right Judgment of our Strength, and computing the Coſt of our Undertaking: That is, to weigh ſeriouſly the Conditions, upon which the Advantages of this Religion are offered to us; and to ſee, whether, upon a fair ſtating of the whole Account, we think it worth our while to forego all other Intereſts, for the ſake of Chriſt, and a good Conſcience. Hence again, the becoming Chriſtians is ſo often expreſs'd by following Chriſt; And that in ſuch Terms, as plainly import our Duty of imitating his Example; not only in the Innocency of his Life, but alſo in the Meekneſs and Conſtancy of his Sufferings and his Death. And indeed the whole manner of our Saviour's Converſation upon Earth, the Poverty, the Contumely, the Pains he choſe to endure, had This, among other wiſe and gracious Ends; to teach all thoſe, who profeſs to be his Diſciples, that he was their Pattern, no leſs than their Inſtructor: And, that They, who aſpire after a part in his Glories, muſt not think much to climb up thither, by the ſame rugged Steps in which he hath led the way.

Luke xiv. 27, *to* 32.

This, we know, was manifeſtly and univerſally the Caſe for ſome Hundreds of Years. And it ſeems to have agreed with the Expectation of the Jews; Who are ſaid to have made the *Pangs of the Meſſiah* a Proverbial Expreſſion for the ſevereſt Afflictions; and frequently to uſe a Tradition al Saying, almoſt the ſame literally with that of *Malachi* here, *Ver.* 2. *Alas! who ſhall live with thoſe great Calamities, which ſhall be ſeen in the laſt* (that is, according to the common import of the Word, in the Meſſiah's) *Days?*

Now

Now it is plain, that a Doctrine, planted with ſuch Circumſtances, left no room for Hypocriſy, or Worldly Conſiderations. Here was no Temptation to diſſemble; no place for receiving it, otherwiſe than upon Principle; and, if any had come in with an inconſiderate Zeal, Trials were daily and hourly at hand: Such, as would not fail to prove their Sincerity, in a manner abundantly juſtifying the Compariſon of *Fuller's Sope*, and *the Refiner's Fire*. And indeed the whole Scheme and Temper of Chriſtianity is ſo contrived, that even the moſt quiet and peaceable Profeſſion of it requires the weaning our Affections from the World, A Reſtraint of all Senſual Appetites, A fixed Deſire and Love of future and heavenly Good Things; And a Reſignation of Mind diſpoſed and reſolved to do and ſuffer any thing, to which the Providence of God ſhall appoint us. So that the firſt coming of Chriſt, which eſtabliſhed this Religion, may, upon all theſe Accounts, be very properly intended by thoſe figurative Deſcriptions, of *trying* and *purifying* the Hearts of Men, which the Prophet was here directed to expreſs himſelf by.

But there is yet another Account, wherein the Jews were more immediately concern'd: I mean the Deſtruction of their City by the *Romans*, and all the Miſeries attending it. This is, by many Expoſitors, underſtood to be the finiſhing Act of Chriſt's firſt Advent. It was a Puniſhment evidently inflicted on that People, for their obſtinate Unbelief, and barbarous Treatment of him. It hath, in a former part of this Treatiſe, been obſerved moſt probably to fulfil the Prediction in the cloſe of the *Fourth* Chapter. And the unparallel'd Calamities of that Diſpenſation, The aſtoniſhing Diſcrimination made by it, The utter Ruin of the Unbelieving Part, And the Safety and Deliverance of the Believing Part, of the Inhabitants, recorded in the Story of that diſmalleſt of all Tragedies, do ſo exactly come up to the

Goſp. on iv. *Sund. in* Advent.

Scripture now at hand; that every Syllable of this Prediction, in the *Third* Chapter, ſeems to have been punctually accompliſhed upon that Occaſion.

Let thus much ſuffice for the Former Part of my Argument, that the Prophecy we are conſidering relates to Chriſt's *firſt* Advent; Becauſe even thoſe Paſſages, which ſeem chiefly to incline to the *Second*, are very fairly applicable to this *Firſt*. I now proceed to the Other Branch of the Argument; Which undertakes to ſhew, that the *Firſt* is the Coming of Chriſt meant here; becauſe there are ſeveral other Paſſages, relating to the ſame matter, and intermix'd with thoſe already mentioned, which do not ſeem capable of being apply'd to any Coming, but to This only.

2. The *Firſt* of theſe is, That the Lord ſhould come *ſuddenly*. Which refers, not to the time of uttering this Prophecy, but to that of the Meſſenger being ſent before his Face. And thus we know in fact it was. For the Hiſtory of the New Teſtament (that all poſſible Right might be done to this Circumſtance) is particularly careful to acquaint us, that our Bleſſed Saviour was born ſix Months after the Baptiſt: And not only ſo, but that Both of them entered upon their publick Miniſtry, at much about the ſame Diſtance of time from each other. So truly did the One prepare the way, So ſuddenly did the other follow; Whether we regard their firſt Appearance in the World, Or their ſetting out in their reſpective Characters and Functions. And thus you ſee, of what weight the particular time of *John*'s Birth, and the Year of his beginning to preach Repentance is, which St. *Luke* gives ſo exact an Account of; and what Light it reflects back upon the Prophecy before us. Which, after having learnt from Chriſt himſelf that *John* was pointed at by it, leaves us under no manner of Difficulty, either Who the Lord ſpoken of here is, or What Coming of His the Prophet had in view.

2. A *Second* Circumſtance is that of coming *to his Temple.* Which agrees with another place in *Haggai*, where thoſe, who beheld how far the Second Temple was inferior to the Firſt in point of Magnificence, are comforted with a Promiſe, that the Lord would fill that *Houſe with Glory, that the Glory of the latter Houſe ſhould be greater than of the former*, and *in that Place he would give Peace.* Now all the Accounts given of the Second Temple, do repreſent it ſo very unequal to the Firſt, not only in point of Structure and Ornament, but eſpecially in reſpect of ſeveral Methods of Revelation, and Marks of God's more eſpecial Preſence; that it muſt needs have been (according to the Prophet's Expreſſion) *in all Mens Eyes, in Compariſon of That, as nothing.* Theſe Paſſages have obliged, not only the generality of Chriſtians, but ſeveral very learned Jewiſh Expoſitors, to interpret *Haggai* of the Meſſiah's perſonal Preſence in the Temple then ſpoken of; as the only Manifeſtation of Divine Favour, which could fill up the Character given there, exalt the Glory of his Houſe ſo high, and juſtify that pompous Introduction, of *ſhaking the Heavens and the Earth, the Sea and the dry Land.* Expreſſions uſual, in the Prophetick Style, to denote very ſurprizing and important Revolutions. Hagg. ii. 7, 8, 9. *Ver.* 3.

And now, Come hither, and behold the Predictions I am ſpeaking of, beginning to be fulfilled this very Day. For Then firſt did the only begotten Son of God viſit his Temple, in Subſtance of our Fleſh; when, in Compliance with the Law of the Firſt-born, he was preſented there by his holy Mother, as the Goſpel for this Feſtival relates. And this Accompliſhment old *Simeon* ſeems plainly to acknowledge, who, by Divine Impulſe, adores the Divine Goodneſs and Truth upon this Occaſion; and tells his Mother (in Words of great Affinity to thoſe of *Malachi* already

conſidered) *Behold, this Child is ſet for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael, and for a ſign which ſhall be ſpoken againſt, that the thoughts of many Hearts may be revealed.*

Luke ii. 25---35.

Hither, at twelve Years old, he repaired, to hear and confer with the Doctors; and told his Parents, they had found him in the Place where his Buſineſs properly lay. Here, at the firſt Paſſover of his Miniſtry, he began to exert his Zeal, and aſſert his Authority, by driving out the Buyers and Sellers, that profaned it. Here, as oft as he reſorted to *Jeruſalem*, he held Conferences, wrought Miracles, and taught daily. Hither he was conducted with *Hoſannas*, as to his proper Palace; to which he declared his Right, by again purging it of Them, who *made his Father's Houſe an Houſe of Merchandize*. And of this he did with Tears foretel the utter and irreparable Ruin. Which, about forty Years afterwards, was ſo ſtrictly verified; as evidently to confine the Prophecy now before us, to ſuch an Advent of the Meſſiah, as found the Temple actually ſtanding. The Neceſſity hereof is ſo evident, even to the Adverſaries of our Faith, who believe the Meſſiah not yet come; that they are forced to take Refuge, in a fanciful Dream of a *Third* Temple, yet to be built. Which yet, were it any where but in their own Imagination, would prove a vain Refuge; ſince no other can reaſonably be ſuppoſed to anſwer the Deſign of theſe Prophets, but that very Temple then in being, when their Prophecies were dictated to, and delivered by, them.

Luke ii. 46, ---49.

John ii. 13, &c.

John v. vii. viii. x.

Luke xix. 47.

Matth. xxi. ---24.

3. Another Paſſage, confining us to Chriſt's *firſt* Coming, is The Character given in thoſe Words, *The Meſſenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in*. The Former part exactly ſuits with all the gracious Methods he

he ſubmitted to, both in his Life and Death, for the Redemption of Mankind, for the Reconciliation of Sinners to his Father, (in this Senſe fulfilling that Clauſe of the Promiſe in *Haggai*, *In this Place will I give Peace, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts*) and, by his Mediation ratifying (as the Author to the *Hebrews* expreſſes it) a new and *better Covenant, eſtabliſhed upon better Promiſes*. Mean while, that Author joins the *new Covenant* and *the Blood of ſprinkling together*; and having by many undeniable Arguments proved, that the whole of this fœderal Tranſaction was finiſhed in the Blood ſhed upon the Croſs, does abundantly inſtruct us, how the Title here is to be applied. Namely, that He, who is moſt ſtrictly the Meſſenger of a Covenant, when ſent from God to ſtrike and confirm it by his own Death; cannot with any Propriety be ſo called, at a Coming, deſigned to make a nice Enquiry into the Obſervance, and dreadfully to puniſh the wicked Violations, of that Covenant.

Hagg. ii. 9.

Heb. viii. 6. *Chap.* xii. 24.

The Same is alſo a Natural Conſequence of the different Reſentments, which Men are ſaid to have of theſe two different Comings. With regard to the Former, He is here ſtyled the *Delight* of the Jews, and in *Haggai*, *the Deſire of all Nations*. And accordingly, at the firſt Completion of this Prophecy, *Simeon* is deſcribed, as one eminent for Juſtice and Devotion, and *that waited for the Conſolation of Iſrael*. This Conſolation appears, from the following Words, to have been the *Lord*'s *Chriſt*. Whom having been aſſured by Revelation that he ſhould ſee, before his Death; he took the Child *Jeſus* in his Arms, bleſſed God for his Mercy and Truth to him, and expreſſed the abundant Cauſe of His, and the World's Joy, in that ſhort pious Hymn, fitly repeated in our daily Evening Service. To the ſame purpoſe, the Goſpel for the Day takes no-

Hagg. ii. 7.

Luke ii. 25.

tice of a Propheteſs preſent at the ſame time; who *gave Thanks unto the Lord, and ſpake of this Child to all them that looked for Redemption in Jeruſalem.* Theſe Inſtances may ſerve to ſhew, both a general Expectation and Deſire of the Meſſiah about that time, and a mighty Satisfaction in them, who believed him then come. But, how very diſtant from theſe the Apprehenſions and Paſſions of Men will be at his ſecond Coming, let the ſame Evangeliſt ſay; who from our Lord's own Mouth repreſents it, by a Seaſon of general *Diſtreſs of Nations, and Perplexity, when Mens Hearts ſhall fail them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things, that are coming on the Earth.* Wide Extremes indeed! But reaſonable both. For who can, without a ſenſible Joy, reflect upon that firſt Coming, upon which the Salvation of a whole World depends? Or Who can look forward to the *Second* without Dread, in which, if the *Firſt* had not opened a Paſſage, for Mercy to come in and temper Judgment, no Fleſh living could poſſibly have been juſtified.

Ver. 38.

Chap. xxi. 26, 27.

4. Once more. *Purifying the Levites*, and *rendering the Offerings in Judah and Jeruſalem acceptable, as in the Days of old*, are likewiſe Deſcriptions very proper for Chriſt's *Firſt*, but not at all applicable to his *Second* Coming. The Levites were litterally purified, who in great Numbers early embraced the Chriſtian Faith; Or, by an eaſy Figure, They, that miniſter in holy Things under the Goſpel, might be thus entitled: And the Spiritual Sacrifices of Prayer, and Praiſe, and Mens Perſons devoted to the Service of God, are thoſe acceptable ones, which in the Church of Chriſt, the Spiritual *Judah* and *Jeruſalem*, are now offered, and ſhall continue to be ſo, with the ſame and even greater Simplicity and Plainneſs, than was exerciſed by the old Patriarchs, before the introducing of that Pomp of Ceremonies, preſcribed by the *Moſaick* Inſtitution,

But

But None of theſe things will ſquare with the Coming of Chriſt to Judgment; for Probation ends, where Retribution begins. And no place then is left for doing any more, to ſerve or pleaſe God; but all that remains, is to *receive according to the things already done in the Body, whether it be good or bad.* 2 Cor. v. 10.

By this time, I hope, my Reader may have attained a competent underſtanding of the Prophecy now under Conſideration; Of the proper Deſign and Completion of it; And of our Church's Wiſdom, in recommending it to our Meditation, on the Day when it firſt began to be fulfilled. I only add, that, as the Collect for this Feſtival teaches us to confeſs, ſo does this Scripture give us fair Intimation of, the Twofold Nature, and diſtinct Perſonality, of Jeſus Chriſt. For That Lord, whoſe the Temple of *Jeruſalem* was, could be no other than very God. The Meſſenger is plainly diſtinguiſhed, from the Perſon who ſent him: And the Meſſenger of a Covenant, ſo made and ratified as hath been explained, muſt needs have been Man *in the Subſtance of our Fleſh.* To this Son therefore, God-Man, together with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, the One true God, let us moſt thankfully aſcribe all Honour and Praiſe, Thankſgiving and Adoration, henceforth and for evermore, *Amen.*

The GOSPEL.

St. Luke ii. 22.

22. *AND when the days of her purification according to the law of Moſes were accompliſhed, they brought him to Jeruſalem, to preſent him to the Lord.*

23. *(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb, ſhall be called holy unto the Lord)*

24. *And to offer a ſacrifice, according to that which is ſaid in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*

22, 23, 24. The Days appointed in *Levit.* xii. See the Comment.

25. This *Simeon* was Son of *Hillel*, an eminent Doctor among the Jews, and Father to the famous *Gamaliel*. His Teſtimony is

25. *And behold, there was a man in Jeruſalem whoſe Name was Simeon; and the ſame man was juſt and devout, waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael: and the Holy Ghoſt was upon him.*

of greater weight, by reaſon of his Knowledge in the Prophetick Writings and Traditions, of the Jews, all which were then allowed to denote the Meſſiah's coming about that time.

26. God gave to him a Prophetick Spirit upon this Occaſion, by which he was aſſured, he ſhould have the Happineſs of ſeeing the ſo much long'd-for Meſſiah.

26. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghoſt, that he ſhould not ſee death, before he had ſeen the Lord's Chriſt.*

27. By the Direction of that Spirit it was, that he came at that time to the Temple, and broke out into the following Hymn of Praiſe,

27. *And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jeſus, to do for him after the cuſtom of the law,*

28. *Then took he him up in his arms, and bleſſed God, and ſaid,*

29. I acknowledge myſelf to have now received the Comfort which thou hadſt promiſed me before my Death.

29. *Lord, now now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, according to thy word.*

30. *For mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation:*

31. A Salvation not confined to any one People, but——

31. *Which thou haſt prepared before the face of all people:*

32. *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Iſrael.*

33, 34, 35. Then *Simeon* proceeded to foretel, how different the events would be, of this wonderful Child coming into the World. For, though the Salvation brought by him were capable of extending to All, and particularly all Jews, where it would be firſt offered: Yet the different Reception given to it, would tend to the Condemnation of Some, and the Benefit of Others. And the Contradiction and Calumny this Bringer of it ſhould meet with, would be a Teſt, to diſcover the Sincerity and Tempers of Men.

33. *And Joſeph and his mother marvelled at thoſe things which were ſpoken of him.*

34. *And Simeon bleſſed them, and ſaid unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is ſet for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael, and for a ſign which ſhall be ſpoken againſt;*

35. *(Yea, a ſword ſhall pierce through thy own ſoul alſo) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

36. *And there was one Anna a propheteſs, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aſer: ſhe was of a great age, and had lived with an husband ſeven years from her virginity:*

37. *And*

37. *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years; which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

37. Eighty four Years old, continuing a Widow after a Married State, and a constant Attendant upon the Publick Service at the usual Hours of Prayer, as also a strict Observer of the customary Fasting Days.

38. *And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

38. She also declared this Child to be the Person, from whom the Redemption, then look'd for by all the Devout, was to be had.

39. *And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.*

39. After this they intended to return home; but an Angel warned them to flee into *Egypt* till after the Death of *Herod*. And then they came back (by a fresh Admonition from an Angel) and settled at *Nazareth*. Compare *Matth.* ii. 13. to the end.

40. *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.*

COMMENT.

THE Festival celebrated by the Christian Church this Day, is designed to perpetuate the Memory of Two very remarkable Actions, shortly after our Saviour's Birth. Both which the Evangelist thought necessary to be mentioned expresly; and the rather, because they were both done in Obedience to the Law. The punctual fulfilling whereof was a Matter of such moment; that not only the Behaviour of his Parents is taken notice of, but the Precepts themselves are particularly referred to, that so their Conformity to them might be the more conspicuous. All this the Three first Verses of the Gospel contain. In treating of this Subject, I will speak to Each Action distinctly, and in Both I shall consider,

First, The Law itself.

Secondly, The Compliance with it in this Case; and

Thirdly, The Reflections and Improvements, fit for us to make from it.

I be-

I begin with that Action, which relates to the Mother. Not only, becauſe it commonly gives Title to this Day, which is from hence called *the Purification of the Bleſſed Virgin*; but becauſe it muſt needs have been firſt, in the order of the thing. For hereby the happy Mother gained her Reſtoration to the Houſe and Worſhip of God; and could not be admitted to preſent her Son, till the Performance of this Service had opened her a free Paſſage into the Temple.

Now the Law concerning this Matter, is contained in the xiith Chapter of *Leviticus*. Whereby it is ordained, That a Woman, after bearing of Children, ſhould continue in a State, which the Law termed Unclean, for a certain Number of Days. Seven Days in ſuch a Manner, that all Converſation or Contact polluted them that approached her; and theſe are therefore called Days of Separation: And three and thirty Days more, which amount to forty in the whole, to be debarr'd from the Service of the Tabernacle, and joining with the Reſt of the Congregation. This was the Rule for a Woman that had brought a Son; and the Time was double for a Daughter. At the Expiration of this Term, ſhe was commanded to bring a Burnt-offering, and a Sin-offering; which wiped out that Stain the Law had laid upon her, and reſtored her to all the Purity and Privileges of her Brethren, who were a People ſanctified to the Lord. This was to be given into the Hands of the Prieſt, at the Door of the Tabernacle; and His offering it, in her behalf, is there ſaid to make an Atonement for her, and to cleanſe her. Which done, ſhe was no longer confined to wait at the Door, (where ſhe gave her Sacrifice to the Prieſt, in token of her being excluded, till the Oblation and Acceptance of that had gained her Admiſſion farther) but had thenceforward free Acceſs to the Houſe and Worſhip of God; and enjoyed all Advantages belonging to a true *Iſraelite*.

One

One thing more I am obliged to take notice of, with regard to this Sacrifice. Which is, That the Burnt-offering differed, according to the Quality and Circumſtances of the Perſon; but the Sin-offering was in effect the ſame. For, Whereas the 6th Verſe of that Chapter preſcribes a Lamb of the firſt Year for a Burnt-offering, and a young Pigeon, or a Turtle Dove for a Sin-offering; In Conſideration, that this Expence might be too burthenſome, upon thoſe of a meaner Condition; God grants a Diſpenſation to the Poor, at the 8th Verſe there, and orders, that, if the Woman be inſufficient for the Charge of the Lamb, then ſhe ſhall bring two Turtles, or two young Pigeons, the one for the Burnt-offering, and the other for the Sin-offering. Accordingly this part of the Law is quoted by St. *Luke*, as beſt agreeing with the Virgin's Fortunes. A farther Evidence ſtill of Infinite Humility and Condeſcenſion, in the Son of the High God, who did not only not diſdain a Mother, but not a Mother of ſo low degree.

Thus ſtands the Law. And, if we would be ſatisfied of the Reaſons and true Intent of it; we ſhall do well to conſider it in its Natural, Civil, and Religious Capacity.

The Natural Reaſon of this Separation ſeems to be, The allowing a time of Reſt and Eaſe, for Women to recover their Strength; and to heal thoſe Bruiſes of our firſt Parents Fall, which are ſtill, upon theſe Occaſions, felt with great Grief and Hazard. This, together with the Prevention of Miſchiefs upon Poſterity, if no ſuch Separation was obſerved, might be ground ſufficient in Nature for this Law. Which Latter may alſo be allowed for a *Civil* and Politick Reaſon of the Inſtitution.

But the Chief and Religious Meaning no doubt was, to be a Reſtraint upon carnal and wanton Deſires; to put Men in mind of that Blemiſh and Pollution, which our Nature is tainted with; and that, as *David* ſays,

Every

Pſal. li. 5. *Every one of us was ſhapen in Wickedneſs, and in Sin did our Mothers conceive us.*

All which was ſhadow'd by the Levitical Uncleanneſs, and by the Sacrifices ordained to purge it away. For, although nothing can be a true and proper Defilement, but Sin; and it is moſt certain, that no Diſeaſes or Weakneſſes of Nature are ſinful; yet had Theſe, under the Moſaick Diſpenſation, a Moral Meaning couched under them, which the Obſervers of the External Ordinance were obliged principally to regard. Thoſe Uncleanneſſes were Carnal only, and not Spiritual; And, when we read of Sin-Offerings for them, we muſt not ſo miſtake the Matter, as if ſuch Offerings were neceſſary, to expiate any real Guilt; or able to do it, if any ſuch had been contracted. For ſuch Pollutions in truth were no more than Legal Incapacities; and the Atonement made for them, was only for Reſtoring the Benefits of external Communion, and declaring Perſons duly qualified Members of the Jewiſh Church. This was the true State of the Caſe. But it is true withal, that, though theſe things did not immediately and neceſſarily imply Sin; yet they had a conſtant and remote regard to it. For all thoſe Impurities, which were merely Ceremonial, did ſignify and myſtically repreſent ſomething, that was morally and ſubſtantially Evil. Thus much is fit to be obſerved, concerning the Uncleanneſs, and the Sin-Offering, mentioned in the Law. But for the Burnt-Offering, That, being a Sacrifice of Praiſe, is of a different Conſideration. And the Acknowledgments expreſs'd by it, will always be a Debt to *God*, ſo long as Mankind are brought into the World with Pain and Anguiſh, and as it is a Mercy to poor travaling Mothers, to be delivered from extreme Sorrow, and preſerved in extreme Danger.

2. And now, after what hath been ſpoken to the Law itſelf, the Nature and Reaſons of it; We ſhall find

find leſs Difficulty, in forming a right Judgment of my *Second* Particular; which concerns the Bleſſed Virgin's Compliance with this Command. The matter of Fact is here related at large; That ſhe ſtaid till *the Days of her Purification, according to the Law of Moſes, were accompliſhed*; Which, reckoning from the Nativity of Chriſt till this Feaſt, make up the juſt Term of Forty Days, appointed after the Birth of a Man Child) That then ſhe came up to *Jeruſalem*, to offer a Sacrifice, ſays the 24th Verſe. Which had not (as ſome have underſtood it) any reſpect at all to her Son, or the Redemption of the Firſt-Born, but (as appears plainly from the Original Law already inſiſted upon) concerned her Self alone. The *Pair of Turtle-Doves, or Two young Pigeons*, being the Burnt and the Sin-Offering, appointed for the Purification of ſuch Perſons after Child-Birth, as could not afford a more coſtly Oblation. Thus we are ſufficiently aſſured, that the Mother of *Jeſus* did, in all reſpects, act according to the Law. The only Doubt upon this Occaſion is, Whether or no, Or how far, ſhe was obliged ſo to do; If it were an Act of Duty and Obedience, or rather, of Condeſcenſion and voluntary Compliance. For Some Interpreters have contended for the One, and Some for the Other, of theſe Opinions. And yet Both may be reconciled, and (all Circumſtances carefully conſidered) Each are truly ſaid to be, in ſome ſenſe, in the right.

The Birth of our Bleſſed Saviour was ſo perfectly different from that of common Men, that it muſt be granted, his Mother could not poſſibly be comprehended within the Reaſon of the Law. The Conception of this Son, by an Operation of Almighty Power, totally Myſterious and Divine, left no place at all, for any Reflections upon the uſual Corruption of Original Sin. Nor was ſhe in reality, in any degree, ſubject to ſo much as a Legal Uncleanneſs upon this account.

And

And ſo far it is moſt true, that ſhe was under no Obligation to the Law, nor within the Intent of it. But yet, ſince her being a Mother was ſufficiently notorious, notwithſtanding her being ſuch, in a manner ſo much above Nature, was a Secret, not yet ripe for Diſcovery; Since it was thought convenient, that her Husband *Joſeph* ſhould for ſome time paſs for *Jeſus* his Father in common Reputation; She was within the Letter of the Law. And fit it was, ſhe ſhould ſubmit, as the known Mother of a Son, to the Ceremonies expected from her. Nor was this all. For, though the Sin-Offering were not in Strictneſs due in any Senſe; yet ſhe lay under the ſame Legal Incapacity, in the Eye of the World, and muſt be reſtored to the Temple by it. And, though the Burnt-Offering was not due, as that of other Parents, to commemorate a Deliverance from Pangs and Danger; yet never ſure were Thanks ſo juſtly due for any Son as This; Never from any Mother, as from Her, who had the Honour to bring forth her own and the World's God and Saviour, the Bleſſing and the Expectation of all the Earth. Add to this: That, ſince the firſt Proffers of Salvation were tendered to the Jews, and the Old Law muſt be aboliſhed by Chriſt; it was neceſſary, that no Circumſtance ſhould be omitted, which might miniſter Occaſion of Chance. He was *made of a Woman, and made under the Law*; and therefore obliged to ſatisfy the Law, before he became capable of redeeming them that were under it. As therefore he was circumciſed in his own Perſon, tho' the Myſtical and Moral part of Circumciſion had nothing to do with him: So his Mother ſubmitted to all the Purifications of any other Iſraeliti̇ſh Woman, tho' ſhe partook not, in any degree, of the Infirmities, and Pollutions, common to other Births. Thus even the moſt rigorous Jew might ſeek, and not be able in any Inſtance, to convince him of Sin, or Contempt of the Moſaick Inſtitution.

Gal. iv. 4.

3. I.

3. I come now, in the *Third* place, to raiſe ſome proper Inferences from what hath been ſaid, and then This Point ſhall be diſmiſſed.

And here *Firſt*, Give me leave to obſerve to you, the Decency, as well as the Antiquity, of thoſe Thankſgivings after Child-Birth, which are practiſed and directed by our wiſe and holy Liturgy, in that Service commonly called, *The Churching of Women.* What God ordained under the old Law, you have already ſeen. But, that the Order we preſcribe, may not be miſtaken for Jewiſh Superſtition; I ſhall ſhew you particularly, how the Church hath moſt prudently diſtinguiſhed, between the Ceremonial and Moral part of that Law. This indeed is a Thing, that deſerves to be well attended to; and the want of it hath miniſtred Occaſion to infinite Sins and Scruples. For, though the Ritual part of *Moſes*'s Law muſt not be retained, becauſe That would overthrow the Righteouſneſs of Faith; Yet the Moral Part muſt not be diſcarded, upon Pretence of Judaiſm, becauſe This is not peculiar to the Race of *Iſrael*, but common to all Mankind. This is not the Ordinance of a Temporal Commandment, but of Eternal Duration and Vertue. Now the readieſt way to judge aright of ſuch Matters, is, To examine into the Nature of the Command. So far as the Reaſon and Subſtance of that holds; ſo much of that Command does, and always will, oblige us. To make this more plain, I ſhall inſtance in the Caſe before us. The bringing Children into the World is what the Commonneſs of it hath made Men look upon without Aſtoniſhment; but, did not Uſe render it familiar, we could ſcarce forbear extolling it, as a moſt convincing Proof of an Almighty and wonderful good Providence. Since therefore the Pain and the Danger was not peculiar to the State and Nation of the Jews; it is certain, the Thankſgivings for being delivered from them, ought not to be ſo neither. And conſequently,

conſequently, becauſe the Peril is univerſal, the Praiſe ſhould be univerſal.

Thankfulneſs then is as much the Duty of Chriſtian Women, as ever it could be of the Iſraelitiſh. And ſo is the Returning thoſe Thanks in the Publick Congregation too: Becauſe the Bleſſings and Benefits of Communion, and the Houſes of God, are as ſacred with Us, as ever they could be under *Moſes*. Conſequently, both the Advantage of our being reſtored to theſe is as valuable; and the Intereſt our Brethren and Fellow-Members have in our Safety, is as great and tender, as that of the Levitical Aſſemblies could poſſibly be. We do not indeed pretend to debar People Admittance upon any Pretence of Pollution; for we know, that Marriage is honourable, and the Children of Chriſtians are a Holy Seed. We preſcribe no Number of Days, but leave that to Cuſtom and Conveniency; and, would Health and Decency permit, ſhould not ſcruple to receive them the very next Day into our Churches. We expect no Sin-Offering, nor a Lamb for a Burnt-Offering, becauſe all Bloody Sacrifices ended in Chriſt. But, though the Uncleanneſs, and preciſe Number of Days, Though the forbidding Acceſs, till that Period be expired, and the Sacrifices enjoined by *Moſes*, be done away in Chriſt; Yet Thankſgiving, and publick *Praiſe* is not, nor ever will be, done away. And, if the Lamb, or the Turtles, be no longer the Expreſſions of thoſe Thanks; yet there is ſomething, which anſwers, which indeed excels them. And this is the Offering to Them, who ſtill live upon God's Revenue; and the yet better Offering of Themſelves, a Holy and Living Sacrifice to God. To which purpoſe it is, that our Church, in her Rubrick, does not only command the accuſtomed Offering to be *paid to the Prieſt*; *but adviſes the Perſon then Churched to receive the Communion.* All which ſhews how decent this Cuſtom is; how unfit the Office is to be performed

performed in private Houſes; how agreeable the whole Inſtitution to the general Deſign of the thing; Which is, To bleſs God for reſtoring Perſons to their Strength, and to the Opportunities of waiting upon him in his own Houſe; where indeed their firſt Viſits are due.

And now, if I might preſume to add any thing more from the Law; It ſhould be this: That as among the Jews, thoſe who were poor, brought a Dove or a Pigeon only, but they of greater Subſtance brought a Lamb for a Burnt-Offering; So now, Though the poorer ſort may well content themſelves with paying thoſe Duties, from which none are (and, if Men rightly underſtood it, none would be) excuſed; yet it were well, if Perſons of a better Condition preſented a Lamb; that is, beſides what Law and Cuſtom make neceſſary, if they gave, of their own Free-will, ſomewhat to Piety and Charity upon theſe Occaſions. For the Poor are God's Receivers alſo; And, what is done to Them being accepted as done to Chriſt, Every Contribution to their Relief is truly offering a Sacrifice.

Theſe are Inſtitutions ſo well grounded, Ceremonies ſo becoming, Directions ſo profitable, that none but they, who are very ill diſpoſed, or very ignorant, will quarrel at Their; nor any, but the Inſenſible and Ungrateful, grudge to perform them. For ſure, according to the *Pſalm* appointed for this Service, *When God hath ſo ſignally delivered your Souls from Death, your Eyes from Tears, and your Feet from falling*; you muſt *needs think yourſelves obliged to walk before the Lord in the Land of the Living: And ſince you have no Reward to give unto the Lord, for all the Benefits he hath done unto you*; the leaſt you can poſſibly do, is *to receive the Cup of Salvation, to call upon His Name, and cheerfully to pay your Vows, in the Courts of his own Houſe, and in the Preſence of his People.* Pſal. cxvi.

I have insisted upon This, perhaps longer than I needed; but the Digression, if it be one, may have its Usefulness. And I would omit no Occasion to convince my Readers of the Wisdom of our Church, The Fitness and the Excellency of her Offices, The admirable Order, and Beauty, and Usefulness, of all our Common Prayer. But to return.

Secondly, Another Inference, which may be raised from this Action, is that of Charity, or Care not to give Offence. For, as the Blessed Virgin submitted to those Ordinances, the Reason and Foundation whereof did not concern her; and seem'd to wash away those Stains, which in reality never were contracted: So it will very well become us, to practise the like Humility and Condescension. Not to act morosely, and shew ourselves rigorous over much, in insisting upon our Privileges and Exemptions; but to perform good Offices cheerfully and liberally; to comply, in some Cases, with the Mistakes and Infirmities of our Brethren; And, though our Consciences be never so well perswaded in the Point of Christian Liberty, yet, for the sake of Others, the not provoking them to Scandal, the maintaining our Authority with them, the securing their good Opinion, and the like; to forego and deny ourselves many Freedoms allowed us; and be content to perform many things, which are not in Strictness required of us.

The Necessity of this would soon appear; Were it but once duly considered, how much Opinion and Example bear sway in the World; and what invincible Bars Prejudice puts to all the Good we can do or say. Indeed, with regard to Religion, the Success of it depends very much upon the Prudence and dextrous Management of the Persons that recommend it. And St. *Paul* himself hath preferred *Charity* before *Knowledge*, for this very Reason; because the One renders a Man stiff and conceited of himself; whereas

1 Cor. viii. 1.

whereas the other ſtudies by all means to *promote the Edification of our Brethren.* And, generally ſpeaking, the firſt ſtep towards edifying any Man is to conciliate his Favour, and be well in his Eſteem. For there are few People ſo void of Partiality, as to ſuffer themſelves to be profited by One, of whom they have conceived a mean, or an ill Opinion. The Omitting of Circumciſion in the Son, and of Purification in the Mother, might be allowable and harmleſs in the ſight of God, and in the ground of the Precepts themſelves; But could the Jews have had that Objection, and repreſented *Jeſus* as profane; This would have done more Miſchief to his Preaching, than all the Malice of his Enemies beſides. Accordingly we find the Scribes and Phariſees perpetually catching at this Handle; and our Saviour as induſtrious to vindicate himſelf. He was very ſenſible, that his Adverſaries could not more effectually carry their Point, than by having him believed a Breaker and a Contemner of the Law; and that, to urge his own Prerogative and Exemption from the Law, would by no means do his Buſineſs, nor ſatisfy the World with his Conduct, though that was moſt innocent in itſelf, and the Reaſons that juſtified it were irrefragable. The Caſe indeed ſhould not be ſo; for Reaſon, and not Affection, ought to determine us. But we muſt be content to deal with Mankind, as we find them. And thus it is but too manifeſt, that, to render our Diſcourſes perſuaſive, it does not ſuffice, that they be true; for alas! the Paſſions muſt be won, as well as the Underſtanding convinced.

Thirdly, Before I leave this Head quite, I would gladly offer ſome ſhort Obſervations, upon the Sacrifices appointed by the Law upon ſuch Occaſions.

And here we may take notice, *Firſt*, That the conſtant manner of thanking God for his Mercies uſed to be, by dedicating ſomewhat to Pious and Charitable Uſes.

Secondly, That in this the Poor were not totally excuſed; but obliged to do ſomething, though it were but ſmall. So that God ſhew'd, that he required, as well as accepted, the Widow's Mite; and that, where *there is a willing Mind*, the Offering would be always interpreted (as the Apoſtle ſays) *according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.*

2 Cor. viii. 12.

Thirdly, That, though the Turtle was accepted, yet it was only there where a Lamb could not be extended to. From whence we are to gather, that God expects our Charity ſhould hold Proportion with our Eſtates; and that They, who have much, ought *to be rich in good Works*, to give in Plenty, and to diſtribute with Gladneſs.

Laſtly, The Sin-Offering here, being the ſame with Poor and Rich, ſhews, that, though our Condition in the World require ſome Difference in our Alms, yet it makes none in our Repentance; That all, equal in the Degree of Guilt, are in this regard equal with God alſo; That He reſpects no Man's Perſon; but High and Low, Rich and Poor, are redeemed with the ſame Price, are obliged to make the ſame Satisfaction, and, that their Souls are of the ſame value with the Heavenly Judge, and the common Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh. Theſe, and ſome other Reflections of the like nature, are proper to be gathered from the Sacrifice, mentioned here to be brought by the Mother of our Lord, for her Purification.

I paſs now to the *Second* Act, recorded by St. *Luke*, and commemorated by the Church at this Feſtival, Which is, Preſenting our Lord in the Temple. And here again we will take a brief view, Of the Law, The Obedience paid to it; And the Inferences it ſuggeſts to us.

As to the Command itſelf, *Firſt*, I ſhall conſider the ſeveral Paſſages, where it is to be found; that ſo,

by

by the Occaſions and the Contexts compared together, we may be able to make ſome tolerable Judgment, of the Foundations whereon it is built, and of the Extent and Importance of it.

The *Firſt*, in which it occurs to us, is the *Thirteenth* of *Exodus*, at the 2d Verſe. There upon the *Iſraelites* Departure out of *Egypt*, *the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, Sanctify unto me all the Firſt-born, Whatſoever openeth the Womb among the Children of Iſrael, both of Man and Beaſt, it is mine.* And, to take away all doubt, what might be the meaning of ſuch a Ceremony, God himſelf has interpreted it, *Ver.* 14, 15. by directing their Poſterity to be taught thus, among the Elements of their Religion. *It ſhall be, when thy Son asketh thee in time to come, What is this? That thou ſhalt ſay unto him, By Strength of Hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the Houſe of Bondage. And it came to paſs, when Pharaoh would* hardly *let us go, that the Lord ſlew all the Firſt-born in the Land of Egypt, both the Firſt-born of Man, and the Firſt-born of Beaſts; therefore, I ſacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the Matrix being Males: But all the Firſt-born of my Children I redeem.*

Now, as the Sabbath is ſaid, in One Place, to have been inſtituted for a Commemoration of God's Reſt from the Works of the Creation; and in Another, to remind the *Iſraelites* of their own Reſt from the Toils and Tyranny of *Egypt*; So the Precept now before us, though it had a great and more eſpecial regard to the Deliverance of *Iſrael*, by the Deſtruction of the Firſt-born; Yet it ſeems not to have been ſo abſolutely confined to This, as not to have had other Ends and Meanings too. For the next time we meet with it, (at *Exodus* xxii. 29.) is in Company with the Law of Firſt-fruits in general. *Thou ſhalt not delay to offer the firſt of thy ripe Fruits, and of thy Liquors; The Firſt-born of thy Sons ſhalt thou give unto me.* That Com-

mand of First-fruits seems to have been one of those, imposed for the Prevention of Idolatry. For, whereas it was customary with the Heathens, to sacrifice of their new Product, to the *Sun*, or *Ceres*, or *Isis*, or the like; the Jews are required to continue the Thing, but to change the Object. An Intimation, that these Services were due; though not to any of these vain Imaginary Deities, yet to the One true God. In the mean while, the Grounds of this Worship were the same to Jew and Gentile both. For both dedicated these Fruits to express their Thanks, and as an Acknowledgment, that all they enjoyed came from a Hand above them; and therefore, in Gratitude, they bless'd the Author of their Plenty, and gave him back, by way of Tribute, a part of his own again. All the Pagan Rites speaking in effect those Words, which we find put into the Mouth of every *Israelite* at this Solemnity; *And now, behold, I have brought the First-fruits of the Land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.*

Deut. xxvi. 10.

2. The Acceptance of this Oblation was That which sanctified and gave them a Title to all the Rest; and that Person was looked upon, as guilty of the boldest Impiety and Sacrilege, who, without it, presumed to use, or enjoy, any of those Possessions. This was Injustice and Usurpation, till that Debt were first satisfied. Insomuch that some Heathen Writers, when they describe a profane Person, and one that had abandoned all Sense of God and Goodness, do it, by calling him a *Man that offered no First-fruits*. Among the Jews, it was also supposed to take off the Pollution and Curse of the wicked Land they succeeded into, and to render their Possessions (as the Language of that Dispensation then spoke) clean unto them.

Μὴ ἀπαρχόμενος.

Again, *Thirdly*, This Offering, as it published their Thanks to the Giver of every good Gift, and was supposed

poſed to ſanctify what they already enjoyed; So was it looked upon, as an effectual Invitation of a Bleſſing, and a ſure Earneſt of Plenty, for the time to come. Many Services of this kind are urged in the Law itſelf, with this Motive, *That the Lord thy God may bleſs thee in all thou putteſt thy Hand unto.* And long Experience drew this Advice from the wiſeſt of Men, *Honour the Lord with thy Subſtance, and with the Firſt-fruits of all thy Increaſe: So ſhall thy Barns be filled with Plenty, and thy Preſſes ſhall burſt out with new Wine.*

Deut. xiv. 29. ---xvi. 15. ---xxiii. 29. ---xxiv. 19. ---xxvi. 15.

Prov. iii. 9, 10.

Now, ſince *Children and the Fruit of the Womb are an Heritage and Gift, that cometh of the Lord*; Since His Bleſſing alone increaſes Mankind; And the Happineſs of Parents and Families, and indeed of the World in general, depends ſo much upon the Goodneſs, and the Number, of the Perſons born into it; No Man can doubt, but there are the ſame Acknowledgments juſtly owing, and the ſame kind Influences of Providence are zealouſly to be ſought, in This, as in any Other, part of our Fortunes. Therefore God might lay a Tribute upon, and reſerve to himſelf a part of, this Increaſe alſo. And it is reaſonable to believe, he did it upon this more extenſive Account; and that he choſe the *Firſt-born-Son*, becauſe this was reputed the beſt and moſt valuable; As *Jacob* ſays of *Reuben*; *he was his Might, and the Beginning of his Strength; the Excellency of Dignity, and the Excellency of Power.*

Pſal. cxxvii. 4.

Gen. xlix. 3.

The manner of God's receiving this Tribute deſerves likewiſe to be conſidered. The Firſtlings of all Clean Beaſts were ſacrificed in kind: Thoſe of Unclean were redeemed by a Lamb; Or, if the Owner would not go to that Price, then the Beaſt itſelf was not ſuffered to live. Of theſe likewiſe no Vows could

Exod. xiii. 12, 13. Levit. xxvii. 26.

be made, becauſe they were God's already; and ſo Men had no Property in, no Right to diſpoſe of, them. The Children were likewiſe to be redeemed, Not with a Beaſt, (as Some have miſtaken that Paſſage in *Exodus*, applying the Lamb to the Sons, which belongs only to the Aſs) but with a Sum of Money. Whereof the *Third* and the *Eighteenth* Chapters of *Numbers* give this Account. God, intending to make his Claim of the Firſt-born, ordered the Sum of Them to be computed, as alſo of the Tribe of *Levi*, at the ſame time. The Levites he accepted, in lieu of an equal Number of the Firſt-born, then alive in *Iſrael*; and made them his own peculiar, by appropriating them to the Service of the Altar. Some will have this to be a Reward to that Tribe, for diſtinguiſhing themſelves from the Reſt, and not joining in the Worſhip of the Molten Calf; But the employing them in Divine Service is generally believed to be the putting that, which was the Buſineſs of the Firſt-born, upon them. For Mankind were not always ſo ignorant, or ſo profane, as the Men of this Generation; who think it degrades and leſſens a Man of Condition, to miniſter about holy things. No: This was eſteemed a Dignity, and a Privilege; The Prerogative of the Maſter and Father of the Family, and reſerved for the Heir and moſt Honourable Perſon in the whole Houſe. So far then as the Levites extended, ſo far they were an Exchange for the Firſt-born; And the Overplus were redeemed at the Price of five Shekels a Man: Which afterwards paſs'd into a ſtanding Rate, to be paid for the Firſt-born in all ſucceeding Ages. And this was accounted God's Revenue; A part of the Stipend, which They, who are ſo often in Scripture honoured with the Title of the Lord's Portion, had to ſubſiſt upon.

Num. iii. xii, 16, 39. *Chap.* xviii. 12, *&c.*

Such

Such is the Law: And the Obedience paid to it, in the Perſon of our Bleſſed Saviour, is full of Myſtery, as the Inſtitution itſelf was full of Figure and Significance.

How far the Circumſtances of this Son came under the Law, is not neceſſary to enquire, after what hath already been ſaid under the former Head. The ſame Reaſons in great meaſure hold for the Preſentation of the Son, which perſuaded the Purification of the Mother. But in Him, thus preſented, we may behold the full Accompliſhment of that Law in all its parts. The Deliverance of *Iſrael*, by the Death of the Firſt-born, was a moſt expreſs Image of the *Iſrael* of God being afterwards reſcued from Slavery and Oppreſſion inſupportable, by the Death of this Firſt-born, and our Elder Brother. The devoting thoſe Children of the *Iſraelites* aſcribed the Glory of the Deliverance to God; and owned, it was He alone, and not any Strength of theirs, which made the Difference between them and their Enemies. And, as That acknowledged the Bleſſing, and ſanctified their Families, and encouraged their Hopes of a future Increaſe; So this Firſt-born was offered for us all, as the Fountain and Foundation of all our Mercies: The Perſon, from whom all the Family of God, both in Heaven and Earth, are bleſſed, and derive their whole Hope and Happineſs. As there, the Levites were taken into the Service of the Tabernacle, inſtead of the Firſt-born; So here, this Firſt-born was made an High Prieſt; The only acceptable, the only Eternal one; And the Diſcharge of that Function, in its ſeveral Offices, hath ranſomed the Lives of all the Reſt. With this Difference only, that God did not ſo exchange Him for a Sum of Money, as not to require his Perſon in kind; For his Life was paid down for the Benefit of the younger Children. And to this Commutation, uſual in the Caſe of the Firſt-born, St. *Peter* may poſſibly allude, when deſiring thoſe Jews,

Jews, to whom his First Epistle was address'd, to consider, *That they were not redeemed with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ himself.* Thus he became (as the Apostle stiles him) *the First-born among many Brethren*; Who are all admitted to the Honour and Benefits of Adoption, made Children of the same Father and Family, and Heirs of the same Heavenly Kingdom, with, and in, and thro' Him.

1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

Rom. viii. 29.

Thus was the Intent of the Law fulfilled; Which, by declaring the First-born Holy, and prescribing a Method for making the rest so, implied, that there should be One-First-born, Originally, and Essentially so: The Perfection of Holiness in himself, The only Source of it to Others. The Same, who, by the Sacrifice of his Death, fulfilled another Typical Branch of the Law, with regard to Beasts; which required the Clean in kind, and with the Blood of such redeemed the Unclean.

These are the Effects, and This is the Mysterious Importance, of the only Son of God being presented in the Temple, in Substance of our Flesh. The practical Improvement whereof to ourselves may be manifold. The Law, though its Letter do no longer oblige, hath yet a Moral Sense of Eternal binding Force. For, since to God was devoted the First-born, *even the Chief of all their Strength*; This shews, that We ought to think nothing too good for Him; that the Best is his Due, and fittest to be offered there from whence the Whole is given. This teaches us to consecrate the Beginning and Choice of our Time, and Pains, and Substance; to dedicate the Prime of our Years, the Sprightliness of our Youth, the Flower of our Wit, the Vigour of our Bodies and Minds to his Honour: To spend our Sweat, our Labours, our Wealth, upon such things especially, as promote Religion, and

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are agreeable to his good Pleaſure; To begin every Day, every Work, with Him; and to take Care, that He be firſt, and uppermoſt, in all our Thoughts and Deſigns. Quite contrary to thoſe unworthy Wretches, who throw away their Time, and Hearts, and Eſtates, and every thing moſt valuable, upon Sin and Folly; who would put God off with the nauſeous and uſeleſs Dregs of Life, the Decays, and Diſeaſes, and Doſings of a feeble old Age; and ſcarce ever think of Him, till other Delights have forſaken them, and they can no longer with Satisfaction think of any thing elſe.

Secondly, When we thus obſerve the Myſtical Intention of the Law, and preſent ourſelves to God, after our Saviour's Example; We muſt remember, that He was brought by a Virgin Mother; and, that our Offering in like manner muſt be chaſte and holy, and come from a pure and clean Heart. A Heart, waſhed from the Pollutions of the World; and deſirous of no Pleaſure, in Compariſon of that, which reſults from ſtudying to pleaſe God, and from the raviſhing Senſe of his Favour and good Acceptance. A Heart, recommended by that Zeal, that Sincerity, which may be well approved; and, if not perfectly without Spot, yet having no Spots, but thoſe of Children; not the falſe Colours of Hypocriſy, or the Blemiſhes of wilful Sin. A Heart, which, according to the Condeſcenſions of the Goſpel-Covenant, may be eſteemed a *White Robe of Righteouſneſs*; though ſullied by the neceſſary Frailties of the Fleſh we wear with it. For ſuch *as Theſe the Father ſeeketh to worſhip him.* But

Laſtly, When we do approach even thus, it muſt always be remembered, to whom we owe our Acceptance; *That by Chriſt alone we have Acceſs with Confidence to the Father*; That He is the Firſt-born, the moſt excellent of every Creature: And, that all our Expectations lie couch-

Epheſ. ii. 18. --- iii. 12.

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ed in this Argument; *If the First-fruits* Rom. xi. 16. *be holy, the Lump is holy*: And becauſe He lives, and reigns for ever; All, that are truly his Brethren and Members, ſhall moſt certainly, in, and by, and with Him, live alſo. Which God grant we may do. *Amen.*

St. MATTHIAS's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. MATTHIAS.

THE Scripture takes notice of St. *Matthias*, in that Place, and upon that Occaſion only, which comes into the Service of the Day. He is, both by *Euſebius* and St. *Jerom*, affirmed to have been one of the Seventy Diſciples. The Province aſſigned him, is ſaid, by the Latter, to have been one of the *Ethiopia's*. The Rivers, mentioned in that Account, inclined Dr. *Cave* to think it ſhould be *Cappadocia*. He was there murdered by the Pagans. In what manner 'tis uncertain; but an Hymn cited by Dr. *C.* out of the Greek Offices, ſeems, as from a received Opinion, to ſpeak him crucified. The Goſpel or Acts of *Matthias* was a ſpurious Book, ſaid by *Euſebius* to have been compoſed by Hereticks, and fathered upon Him. And *Clemens Alexandrinus* obſerves, that *Valentinus*, *Marcion*, and *Baſilides*, ſhelter'd their vile Tenets, under the pretended Authority of this Apoſtle.

Euſeb. Hiſt. I. *C.* xii. *Hieron. in Catal.*

Hiſt. II. *c.* xxv. *Strom.* 7. p. 765.

The COLLECT.

Acts i. 24, 25, 26. O Almighty God, who, into the place of the Traitor *Judas*, didſt chooſe thy faithful Servant *Matthias* to be of the number of the twelve Apoſtles; Grant that thy Church, being always preſerved from falſe Apoſtles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true Paſtors, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

The

The EPISTLE.

Acts i. 15.

15. *IN those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty)*

PARAPHRASE.

15. Soon after our Lord's Ascent into Heaven, and before the miraculous Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, *Peter* proposed to them the Choice of a twelfth Apostle, in the room of *Judas*.

16. *Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus.*

17. *For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.*

18. *Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.*

19. *And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is say, The field of blood.*

20. *For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, let no man dwell therein. And, His bishoprick let another take.*

16, *&c.* To this end, he first puts them in mind of a famous Prophecy, fulfill'd in that wretched Man; and relates both his Crime, and the Punishment of it.

20. Particularly, that he should fall from that high Dignity in the Church, which had been conferred upon him; and that Another, more worthy of that Character, should succeed him in it.

21. *Wherefore of those men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

21, 22. But this Person, of necessity, should be one, who, by a constant Attendance upon Jesus, hath been perfectly acquainted with what he had done and taught, during the whole course of his publick Ministry: That he may be able to concur in the same Testimony with the Eleven, in All material points of the Christian Faith; and especially in that of Christ's rising from the Dead.

23. *And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.*

23. Hereto the Assembly readily agreed, and two Persons, thus qualified, were accordingly in nomination.

24. *And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of those two thou hast chosen,*

25. *That he may take part of this ministry and Apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.*

26. *And they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

24, 25, 26. Whereupon, (after devout Prayer to God, that He would direct them in their Choice) They proceeded in it by way of Lot. And, the Lot falling on *Matthias*, he was taken into the Vacancy, and made the Twelfth Apostle.

COMMENT.

COMMENT.

THE main thing here intended, is to acquaint us with the Reaſons and Manner of this Day's Apoſtle being choſen into the place of *Judas*. But, before we enter upon that Point, let me make a Remark or two on St. *Peter*'s Diſcourſe concerning that wretched Man, which contains ſome things, too profitable to be paſs'd over, without our particular notice.

1. Firſt then, It is obſervable, that St. *Peter*, mentioning the Fact for which *Judas* periſhed, does it in theſe Terms, *Judas, who was guide to them that took Jeſus.* We cannot reaſonably imagine this Apoſtle, or Any to whom he ſpoke, to be wanting in a juſt Indignation at the Treachery of this fallen Brother; and yet the moſt villainous of all Crimes could not have been expreſs'd in ſofter Words. Now my Deſign is, by this Remark, to give Check to that Liberty Men are apt, and think themſelves abundantly warranted, to take, in ſpeaking of ill Actions and ill Men, with the moſt aggravating Terms of Infamy and Reproach. There are, I confeſs, (and I have heretofore ſhew'd) ſome Occaſions, which even require this ſort of Treatment from us. But, except in ſuch Circumſtances, and for promoting ſuch good Ends, as were there ſpecified, it argues more of a charitable and truly Chriſtian Spirit, to abate of our Fierceneſs, even againſt thoſe Practices, of which we do well to conceive the utmoſt Abhorrence. For the virulent Language, ſo often poured out upon profligate and wicked People, is many times the effect, not of Zeal, but Ill-nature. But how barbarous and wicked a Pleaſure is it, to upbraid, expoſe, and inſult over, the Faults of our Brethren, which we ought to pity, and be ſorry for, even then, when we ought to condemn and deteſt them?

Conſp. for vl. Sun. aft. Trin.

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2. To this purpoſe we ſhall do well to attend to a *Second* Particular, very conſiderable in St. *Peter*'s Management of this Subject. Which is, Referring the Audience to an antient Prophecy, foretelling that Crime of *Judas* many Hundred Years before. Thus it appeared, that, in the whole matter there was a ſecret over-ruling Providence, without whoſe Knowledge and Permiſſion none of thoſe things are done, which in themſelves carry ſo great a degree of Guilt and Horror, that one would ſtand amazed, how even the moſt abandoned of Men ſhould ever be capable of committing them. Such Events They, who think too ſuperficially, have frequently made Objections againſt the Being and Providence of God. But the Apoſtle here hath taught us to penetrate deeper into, and pronounce more juſtly of, them. He hath ſhew'd the Reflections properly reſulting from thence, to be, That it is reaſonable to endure patiently the ill Effects of that aſtoniſhing wickedneſs, which God ſees fit to permit; To contemplate His Wiſdom and Long-ſuffering in them all; and not give way to Impatience or Irreligious Suggeſtions, upon account of any Injuries or Uneaſineſſes to ourſelves; from Practices, which He, who knew, did yet not prevent or interpoſe againſt, though they were manifeſt Affronts to his Honour, and outrageous Violations of his Laws. In ſhort, We ſhould ſatisfy ourſelves, that He, who always orders that which is beſt, and can at pleaſure put an effectual ſtop to the moſt daring and potent Offenders, forbears to do ſo, for no other reaſon, than becauſe he knows, though we ſhort-ſighted Mortals cannot tell why, it to be better, that their Impieties ſhould not be more reſtrained.

3. But then thoſe Offenders ſhould by all means obſerve, *Thirdly*, That St. *Peter*, together with the Crime, does alſo relate the Puniſhment, of *Judas*; as a thing no leſs foreknown and foretold. And the natural

tural Conſequence of this would be; that Wickedneſs ſo connived at and foreſeen, does involve the Actors in no leſs Degree of Guilt, for the bringing about ſuch Events, and effecting ſuch wiſe Counſels of Providence, as are produced from thence. For God, as a Wiſe Man expreſſes it, hath left Men in the Hand of their own Counſel. And, altho' the Divine Omniſcience do perfectly underſtand all their Doings, and all their Thoughts, long before; Yet are thoſe Thoughts and Doings ſtill their own. He does not determine their Wills by any Phyſical or forcible Reſtraint, but he hath given them great variety of Moral Reſtraints. The Light of Reaſon, The Guidance of Revelation, The Power of Conſcience: And by theſe he expects Men ſhould govern themſelves. If they do not; he convinces them, that though the Fact be Theirs, the Conſequences are His: And therefore he frequently exerts himſelf in turning to his own Glory, and the Good of the World, the Malice and miſchievous Deſigns of baſe and villainous Wretches. Thus, I have formerly made appear, he did in the very Caſe before us. But ſtill God puniſhes Men, not according to Events, but Intentions; and conſiders, as a Judge, the Miſchief they actually did, or deſigned; without any regard to the Benefit he turn'd it to, which it was not any part of Their Meaning to promote.

Eccles. xv.

Gosp. for Tuesd. before Easter.

I could not well overlook Paſſages, qualified to yield ſo much Profit, though not ſo immediately concerned in the Solemnity of this Day. I come now to the other parts of the Epiſtle which are ſo; and ſhall there obſerve *Three* things,

1. *Firſt*, The Nature and Dignity of the Apoſtolick Office.

2. *Secondly*, The Reaſon given for filling up the Number, when this Vacancy was made.

3. *Thirdly*,

3. *Thirdly*, The manner of the Choice.

1. As to the *First* of These, I find myself in great measure prevented, by what hath been formerly delivered upon another Occasion. The Apostolick Office and Authority was then shew'd to consist in Three things. 1. In propagating and establishing the Kingdom of the Messiah, our Lord *Jesus*; by bringing Men to the Belief and Obedience of his Blessed Gospel. 2. In a Power of ordering and making such Laws and Constitutions in Matters spiritual, as shall from time to time be found necessary for the good Government of all the Subjects in this Kingdom; for admitting into, punishing in, and casting out of it, as Occasion shall require. And, 3. In appointing Successors with the like Powers, for continuing the Order, and administring the Sacred Offices of the Church. These several Rights and Privileges, then more at large insisted on, seem to have been not intimated only, but confirmed and exercised, by the Proceedings we are now considering, as proper to this Festival. *Gosp. for 1. Sund. after* Easter.

The *First* of them, which relates to the Propagation and Establishment of the Gospel, I take to be very plainly included, in the 21st and 22d Verses. There St. *Peter* declares the End and proper Business, which this new Apostle was to be ordained for; and the Qualifications requisite to render him capable of it.

The End or Business to which he was ordained, is expressed, by being a Witness (together with the Eleven) of our Lord's Resurrection. I lately had Occasion to observe, how important an Article This of Christ's Resurrection is: How particular a stress the Scriptures of the New Testament lay upon it; And how frequently it is mentioned, in a Sense so comprehensive, as to conclude the whole Object of the Christian Faith. That thus we are to understand it here, it evident from *Comm. on Epist. St.* Andrew's *Day.*

the Qualification premiſed. For had that ſingle point, of Jeſus riſing again, been the whole Subject-matter of the Apoſtle's Teſtimony; to have retained to Jeſus at that time, had ſufficed to render theſe Candidates capable of this Office. But, in regard the *having com-*

Ver. 21, 22. *panied with the Eleven all the time that Jeſus went in and out among them, beginning from the Baptiſm of John, until the ſame Day that he was taken up from them:* In regard This, I ſay, is made a neceſſary Condition of the Choice here propoſed; It follows, that the Actions and Doctrines of our Bleſſed Saviour, during the Courſe of his publick Miniſtry, are all taken into this Evidence, and imply'd by that Head of our Lord's Reſurrection. For which comprehenſive Senſe of that Expreſſion, my Reader will content himſelf to receive the Reaſons, laid down in the Diſcourſe laſt referr'd to.

Were not this long and intimate Acquaintance with our Bleſſed Saviour of the utmoſt Conſequence, for bringing Men over to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity; Why did St. *John* begin his firſt Epiſtle with ſo ſolemn

1 John i. 1, 2, 3. a Preface; *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life; (For the Life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt) That which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have Fellowſhip with us,* &c. For the ſame Reaſon St. *Luke*, who was not himſelf an Apoſtle, when writing his Goſpel, which

Acts i. 1, 2. he ſtiles a *Treatiſe of all that Jeſus began both to do and teach, until the Day that he was taken up*, obviates any Objection, which might be made, from his want of the Apoſtolick Character,

Luke i. 3. by affirming, That *He alſo had a perfect underſtanding of all things from the very firſt.*

first. To which we may add, that St. *Matthew*, and St. *John*, were themſelves of this higheſt Order; and that, as St. *Luke* was a Companion and Fellow-Labourer with the Apoſtle *Paul*, ſo was St. *Mark* likewiſe of *Peter*; whom many of the Antients affirm, if not to have dictated, yet to have review'd and approved, the Goſpel delivered down to us under his Name.

Iren. l. iii. 11, 14.
Euſeb. l. ii. c. 15. l. vi. c. 14.
Dem. Evang. l. iii. 5.
Iren. l. iii. 1.
Nicepb. l. ii. 45.

So truly did the Apoſtles make good the Character given of them here, by bearing witneſs; So ſafely may all ſucceeding Ages depend upon their Evidence of our Bleſſed Lord's Reſurrection; that is, The entire Account of his Doctrine and Doings, while upon Earth. I call it Their Evidence at preſent, in regard there is not one of the ſeveral Accounts delivered of theſe things in Scripture, which, in its laſt reſort, does not reſt in, and derive itſelf from, the Information and Authority of One or Other of the Apoſtles.

But theſe Four Goſpels, it muſt be acknowledged, were indited and publiſhed at different times; And the very earlieſt of the Number, not till after thoſe Apoſtles had diſtributed themſelves into different Places, for the more ſpeedy and ſucceſsful ſpreading the Doctrine entruſted with them. The Offices of Witneſſes therefore in the mean while, we have no reaſon to doubt, was perform'd by ſome ſuch uniform Summary of Faith, as might be a convenient Inſtruction to their Hearers, and ſuffice for ſuch other Purpoſes, as were then to be ſerved by it. Of This, I ſay, we have no reaſon to doubt, becauſe the Scripture itſelf hath frequently taken notice of it. For of what elſe can we interpret thoſe Expreſſions in St. *Paul*, St. *Peter*, and St. *Jude*; *The Form of Doctrine delivered* to the *Romans*; The *Form of ſound Words*, which *Timothy had heard*, and was commanded *to hold faſt*: *The good Things committed*

Rom. vi. 17.
2 Tim. i. 13, 14.

mitted to his truſt, through the Holy Ghoſt: The *Way of Righteouſneſs*, The *holy Commandment*, and *The Faith which was once delivered to the Saints?* To which we may add thoſe equivalent Phraſes of St. *John*, *That which you have heard from the beginning*, *The Unction from the Holy One, which ye have received*, and *which teacheth you of all things*, and *The Commandment which had been received from the beginning.* Theſe, and ſome other Paſſages there are, not to be otherwiſe accounted for, than by referring them to ſome fixed Rule of Belief and Practice, by common Agreement propoſed to all, whom the firſt Chriſtian Preachers laboured to convert. A Rule in Subſtance the ſame Teſtimony with, and then ſupplying the want of, that more ample one, which is ſince contain'd in the Books of the New Teſtament. So that, in both Caſes, The Witneſſes were the ſame; The Matter teſtified the ſame; And no other Difference between the Written and Unwritten Word, except that only, which regards the Manner of delivering the Evidence.

2 Pet. ii. 21. Jude 3.

1 John ii. 20. 27.

2 John 4, 5, 6.

However, if bearing Witneſs were the whole Buſineſs; Many no queſtion did, and Any, who had the Qualifications mentioned here, as neceſſarily previous to the Choice of an Apoſtle, might perform that Part; and yet continue in their former Station. That *Matthias* in particular wanted not Knowledge to fit him for this Work, is plain from the Terms upon which he was appointed; And, that he wanted not Zeal and a good Diſpoſition, is no leſs manifeſt, from the Knower of all Hearts ordering him to be choſen. And therefore we muſt take another view of the Apoſtolick Office, to find out the Neceſſity of His being advanced to it.

Now, though it be true, that Others might, and did preach the Doctrine of Chriſt; Yet was not their Authority,

Authority, even in this reſpect, equal to that of the Apoſtles. For the Scriptures take expreſs notice of ſeveral Diſtinctions in point of Power, between Them, and other Miniſters of the Goſpel. Particularly, that to Them Chriſt left the Care of his Church; to Them gave the Power of adminiſtring his Sacraments; of teaching and gathering Diſciples; of feeding his Sheep; of remitting and retaining Sins; nay, and even of conferring the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, by laying on of Hands. In ſhort, The Powers, which he exerciſed in his own Perſon, while the Church enjoyed his Bodily Preſence, were delegated to Them, as after his Departure, his Deputies and Vicegerents. Of theſe Powers ſome were committed by Them to inferior and ſubordinate Miniſters; And Others reſerved to their own higheſt Order. And this was done after their Lord's Example, who made a like Diſtinction between the Seventy and the Twelve. For of theſe laſt he ſays (and more could not be ſaid to magnify the Extent and Dignity of their Office) that to *them* he *appoints a Kingdom, as his Father had appointed unto Him, That they may eat and drink at his Table, in his Kingdom, and ſit on Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael.*

Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Chap. xxvi. 20, 26, 27.

John xx. 22, 23.

Acts viii. 17, 19.

Luke xxii. 29, 30.

Thus, after our Lord's Aſcent into Heaven, and the Deſcent of the Holy Spirit, all the Juriſdiction and Government of this Spiritual Society, the Church, was lodged in the Apoſtles. Whoſoever had any part of it afterwards, received it from this Source. The Inſtances of exerciſing it, in Matters of Expedience and Diſcipline, occur frequently in the Epiſtles; and one very famous Example of it we have in the Book of *Acts*, upon the Controverſy concerning Circumciſion, and other *Moſaical* Rites;

Acts xv.

Whether the new Converted Gentiles were obliged to them. The Determination whereof was referred to the Apoſtles and Elders at *Jeruſalem*; And their Decree upon it was received in, and ſubmitted to, by all the Churches.

Acts xv. *Chap.* xvi. 4.

The Inſtances indeed of their Authority in preſcribing Rules, reforming Abuſes, ſettling Points of Decency and Order, cenſuring Criminals, pardoning Penitents, ſhutting out from, and reſtoring to, Communion; And the ready and conſtant effect theſe Acts had, are undeniable Proofs of their exerciſing, and of the univerſal Senſe of Chriſtians that they had right to exerciſe, ſuch Power; in all things, wherein the Diſcipline and good Government of this Spiritual Kingdom were concerned. But That, which comes up yet cloſer to the Words of St. *Peter* before us, is their being, under Chriſt, not only the common Source of Spiritual Authority in Matters of Diſcipline, but the Centre of Spiritual Unity in Matters of Doctrine. Thus the new Converts on the Day of *Pentecoſt* have their Faith, their Sincerity, their good Agreement, and their Devotion deſcribed, by *continuing ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.*

Acts ii. 42.

Thus, when the falſe Judaizing Teachers had *troubled the Minds of many, ſubverting their Souls, and ſaying they muſt needs be circumciſed*; it was thought a ſufficient Warrant for rejecting ſuch Impoſtors and their Frauds for the future, for the Apoſtles to declare, that *They never gave any ſuch Commandment.* Thus their Decree is pronounced the Act of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as of the Aſſembly. Thus they are ſaid to be a part of the Foundation, on which this Spiritual Houſe, the Church of Chriſt, is built. Thus, in the Paſſages I had Occaſion to produce, as Proofs of a Standard of Faith and Manners then agreed on, we find abundant

Chap. xv. 24, 28.

Eph. ii. 20.

abundant Intimations of the People's readily receiving thoſe; as Terms of becoming Chriſtians. And indeed they ſeem to have been by the Apoſtles made the Conditions of the Covenant at Baptiſm. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, entruſted in Their Hands, were to be uſed according to the Direction of their Maſter; and, though they did not originally make, yet they declared and explained, the Will of their Lord in Matters of this Nature. To render ſuch Declarations more Authentick, and indeed above all Exception, they were ordered to ſuſpend the Exerciſe of their Powers, till the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be poured out upon them. But afterwards, when acting and ſpeaking under the Influence of this infallible Guide, their Authority was juſtly eſteem'd ſo ſacred, that the only Queſtion debated among ſober and well-minded Chriſtians, ſeems to have been, Whether the Doctrine or Practice at any time in Diſpute could be traced up to the Apoſtles. It being generally agreed, that whatever they have delivered, as ſuch ought, and that nothing which they did not deliver ought, to be required, as an Article of Belief neceſſary to Salvation.

Hence St. *Paul* thanks God, that the *Romans* had *obeyed* from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, *whereto they had been delivered*; (for ſo the Original expreſſes it) *Timothy* is charged *to keep*, and *to commit to faithful Men, the good thing intruſted with him*; to *remember and diſcharge the good Profeſſion he had made before many Witneſſes*. St. *Peter* alſo ſpeaks of the Holy Commandment *being known* or acknowledged, and St. *John* of the *Unction* being received. By all which (as I ſaid) ſeems to be intended the publick Profeſſion of Belief and Obedience, ſolemnly made at Baptiſm: Such a Summary of a Chriſtian's Duty, as the Apoſtles thought proper

Rom. vi. 17.
1 Tim. vi. 14, 20.
2 Tim. i. 14.
--- ii. 2.
1 Tim. vi. 12.
2 Pet. ii. 21.
1 John ii. 20, 27.

to require, at each Man's Admiſſion into the Church; Such again, as might ſerve for a Model and Meaſure, to frame and examine the Teaching of all other Miniſters by; Such a one, I ſay, being form'd, eſtabliſhed, and enjoined for theſe Uſes by the Apoſtles; And, as ſuch, received, reverenced, and obeyed, by the whole Church, as Chriſt's own Act and Command, in thoſe his Vicegerents: We may ſee very good reaſon, why *Matthias*, (ſuppoſing him equally qualified before, both as to Knowledge and Zeal,) ſhould yet be taken into the Number of the Apoſtles. And thus it comes to paſs, that, beſides the Governing part peculiar to themſelves, their Authority, even in the inſtructing part, was ſuch, that they were, in a Degree far more eminent than any elſe, entitled *Witneſſes of our Lord's Reſurrection.*

Yet ſtill another Queſtion remains, concerning the Number neceſſary for theſe Purpoſes, and why Eleven might not as well ſuffice. Which, it is plain, they could not; for St. *Peter* is expreſs, that one muſt be ordained in the room of *Judas.* The Reaſon whereof I come now in the

Ver. 22.

2. *Second* place to conſider. The Apoſtle ſeems to ground this Neceſſity upon another, mentioned at the 16th Verſe: That of fulfilling a Prophecy relating to this Matter; One Clauſe whereof ſays, that the Office or Biſhoprick of *Judas* ſhould be *taken by another.* Now, here I might inſiſt, on the manner of ſuch Applications of Prophecies being ſo expreſs'd, as may ſeem to import a Cauſe, when really an Event only is intended; and that the New Teſtament does not mean, That the thing was done for that very purpoſe, that ſuch a Prediction in the Old might be accompliſhed; but only that, by the thing ſo done, as related in the New, ſuch a Prediction in the Old Teſtament was remarkably accompliſh'd.

Ver. 20.

But

But I have formerly obſerved, that this Neceſſity of fulfilling things foretold depended upon another, Antecedent to it. The Truth of God muſt be juſtified by Events correſpondent to his Predictions; But that Truth had never engaged itſelf by ſuch Predictions, unleſs God had firſt reſolved upon thoſe Events. If therefore we can diſcover any reaſon, which might determine our Lord to chuſe the preciſe Number of Twelve Apoſtles, and oblige the Continuance of that Number at this time; That may be allowed to have given Occaſion, as well to the Prophecy repeated by St. *Peter*, as to the Supply of this Vacancy, which accompliſhed it. *Goſp. Quinquag. Sund. Vol.* II.

The Correſpondence between the Church before and after our Saviour; Or, as the Scripture phraſes it, between *Iſrael after the Fleſh*, and the Spiritual *Iſrael of God*; hath been in ſeveral Particulars illuſtrated heretofore. 1 Cor. x. 18. Gal. vi. 16.
This, where it was conſiſtent with the Nature of each Diſpenſation, did not only ſhew Reſpect to the Legal Eſtabliſhment; (which, though leſs perfect, was yet of Divine Extract) but would naturally recommend it to the Eſteem of the Jews; and was therefore fit to be continued, ſo long as they continued a ſettled Polity and People. As therefore *Moſes*, and *Joſhua*, Each the Type of Chriſt, had next under Them Twelve, who were called the Princes of the Tribes; repreſenting thoſe Patriarchs, from whom thoſe Tribes had their Deſcent and Denomination: And as Theſe were particularly diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, by ſpecial Acts of Authority, and Divine Deſignation: So had this Deliverer from Spiritual Bondage, this Leader of his People into the Land of Promiſe, his twelve Apoſtles; the Patriarchs and Princes of this new People of God, to gather, to govern them, and Numb. i. 44. ---vii. 3. xiii. 2. Joſh. iii. iv.

to

to act in their Behalf, as appointed by their common Head. And hence it comes to paſs, that the Agreement in the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Polity is ſo often inſinuated, to the Honour of theſe Apoſtles, by mention of *Twelve Thrones on which They ſhall ſit judging the Twelve Tribes of Iſrael*: Of the Church repreſented by a *Woman crowned with twelve Stars*: And of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*, deſcribed with a *Wall great and high, with twelve Gates, and at the Gates twelve Angels, and Names written thereon, which are the Names of the twelve Tribes of the Children of Iſrael. And the Wall had twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apoſtles of the Lamb.*

Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30. Rev. xii. 1. ---xxi. 12. Ver. 14.

Theſe, and ſome other like Alluſions there are, which manifeſtly prove a Reſemblance deſigned to be (for ſome time at leaſt) kept up, between the Natural and the Spiritual *Iſrael*, with regard to the chief Officers in Both. But this Reſemblance regards the Number, no leſs than the Quality, of thoſe Chiefs and conſequently rendered a Supply neceſſary to the Apoſtolick Order, when *Judas* had diminiſhed this ſet Number by his Fall.

3. And, as the Similitude holds in the Number of theſe Chiefs of the Spiritual *Iſrael*, ſo does it likewiſe in the manner of their Appointment. The Heads of the Tribes of *Iſrael*, after the Fleſh, were firſt named by God himſelf; The Princes of the *Iſrael* after the Spirit, were choſen by Chriſt. And the Perſon, here choſen, was of Divine Deſignation. For the manner of the Proceeding is ſuch as manifeſtly refers the Iſſue to God's Determination. The Nominations of this kind were afterwards made by the Apoſtles themſelves; becauſe then Their Act was properly God's Act; and the Choice of fit Perſons to ſerve in ſo high a Station, was a Matter

Numb. i. 5.

of

of ſo great Importance to the Church, that no doubt can be made, but His very particular Aſſiſtance was preſent with them in it. But at this time the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given; therefore in a Caſe, which was ſingular, they had recourſe to a Method, which had often been practiſed, and was always believed to denote the ſpecial Appointment of God.

The deciding of things contingent by Lots was a Practice inſtituted by God's own Command. Thus the two Goats, on the ſolemn Day of Attonement, were ſeparated; The one for Slaughter to be ſacrificed, The other for Eſcape into the Wilderneſs. Thus the Land of *Canaan* was divided, and a Portion of it aſſigned to each Tribe. Thus the Cities of the Levites were ſet apart, out of the Inheritance aſſigned to the other Tribes. Thus it was determined, who ſhould revenge the Wickedneſs of *Benjamin*, by attacking *Gibeah*. Thus the Services of the Prieſts in the Sanctuary were diſtributed. All which were ſo conſtantly believed to be of God's immediate Aſſignation, as to give Occaſion for that Aphoriſm of *Salomon*, *The Lot is caſt into the Lap, but the whole diſpoſing thereof is of the Lord.*

Levit. xvi. 7, 8.
Num. xxxiii. 54.
Joſh. xiii. 2, 6.
---xxi. 8.
Judg. xx. 9.
2 Chron. xxiv. 5, &c.
Luke i. 5, 9.
Prov. xvi. 33.

From hence, as a Matter univerſally acknowledged, among Perſons converſant in the Religion and Cuſtoms of the Jews, it appears, that the putting the Choice of an Apoſtle upon this Iſſue, was a very ſolemn way of referring it to the Deciſion of God himſelf. Which is yet farther evidenced, by that ſolemn Invocation of him upon this ſo very important Exigence. Whereby theſe great Patterns of Piety have ſet us an Example, which the Wiſdom of our excellent Church hath directed us all to follow, by begging, in her Collect for

for this Feſtival, that We, and all Chriſtians, *being always preſerved from falſe Apoſtles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true Paſtors, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

St. Matth. xi. 25.

25. Jeſus, then reflecting upon the Succeſs and good Effect, which the Preaching and Miracles of his Apoſtles ſent forth (as is related *Chap.* x. 5. Compare *Luke* x. 21.) to ſpread his Doctrine, had met with, in Perſons of a Diſpoſition different from that upbraided in the Verſes next before; gave ſolemn Thanks to his Father, for it: And magnified the Wiſdom of that Diſpenſation, which left the ſelf-conceited in the Ignorance they affected, and inſtructed the Meek and Diſpaſſionate, the Modeſt and the Lowly, in the Myſteries of the Goſpel.

25. *AT that time Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.*

26. *Even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.*

27. Myſteries, which God had revealed by his Son, and not to be known by any, but ſuch as ſubmit to be taught by him.

27. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any Man the Father, ſave the Son, and he to whomſoever the Son will reveal him.*

28. Such therefore he invites, with a Promiſe of eaſing their Minds of all thoſe Hardſhips, which the Levitical Law, the Conſciouſneſs of their own Faults and Frailties, or the Difficulties of Humane Life, would otherwiſe continue to load them withal: And in compariſon whereof, the Duty and Subjection he requires of them, would be found very ſupportable.

28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.*

29, 30. For They, who bring with them a right Temper of Mind, and imitate the Meekneſs and Humility of their Maſter, ſhall not fail to find him gentle in his Commands, and the Diſcharge of them ſoftened by great Comforts and inward Satisfactions.

29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.*

30. *For my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light.*

COM-

COMMENT.

THE Uſe I ſhall make of this Paſſage at preſent is, by fixing on the latter part of it, to ſhew, what encouragement Men have to *come to Chriſt, to take his Yoke upon them, and to learn of Him*; Upon account of that *Reſt*, promiſed here to the *Souls* of them that do ſo. In plain terms, I mean to prove, that Chriſtianity hath provided for all, who ſtudy and practiſe it in good earneſt, the beſt Refreſhments under, and moſt effectual Remedies againſt, any Difficulties or Sufferings; which either They to whom theſe Words were ſpoken, did, or which any other Perſons whatſoever, can poſſibly labour under.

To this purpoſe I ſhall ſet myſelf to ſatisfy the Two following Enquiries.

1. *Firſt*, What thoſe Burthens of Miſery are, which expoſe Men to all that Hardſhip and Diſquiet, thought fit to be intimated here by Weariſomneſs, and Labour, and Pain. And then,

2. *Secondly*, What Comforts and Cures the ſincere Obedience of Chriſt and his Goſpel adminiſters to Each of theſe reſpectively.

1. As to the Cauſes of this Miſery, They may, I think, be conveniently enough reduced to Three ſorts. Such as ariſe, Either

Firſt, From the Temper of the Jewiſh Law, and the State of Mens Souls under that Diſpenſation. Or,

Secondly, From a Conſciouſneſs of their own Sins. Or,

Laſtly, From the Afflictions of the preſent Life.

1. The Firſt of theſe, which regards the Jewiſh Law, though exceeding pertinent to our Lord's Purdoſe, and the Circumſtances of the Perſons, with whom he was then conferring, is yet to Us (Bleſſed be God)

God) of no farther Concern; than as the Weight of the Burthen, when rightly underſtood, may make us duly thankful for the Greatneſs of the Deliverance. Referring therefore to my *Second* Head ſo much as may be ſerviceable to that End: I proceed to the next Burthen, which I preſume our Saviour might have in view. And that is,

2. The Conſciouſneſs of our own Sins. It were eaſy to enlarge on this Occaſion, by repreſenting the Juſtneſs of giving to a vicious Courſe of Life the Titles of Wearineſs and Labour. How exactly they ſquare to the inſupportable Tyranny of ungovern'd Appetites and Paſſions, and to the endleſs Drudgery of attempting to gratify them. But this I rather take to be inſinuated at the 30th Verſe, where the *Yoke* of Chriſt is affirmed to be *eaſy*, and his *Burthen light*. And therefore, ſince neither the Meaſure of this Diſcourſe permits, nor the Point I am upon, obliges me, to go ſo far; I chooſe to confine my Thoughts to that Senſe of Guilt in particular, which we often find *David*, and other Holy Penitents in Scripture, complaining of, as a Load very ſore, and *too heavy for them to bear*.

Pſal. xxxviii. 4.

At the Inſtant of Commiſſion, we are warmed with Paſſion and eager Deſire. The Proſpect of ſome Pleaſure or Profit carries us out of ourſelves; and, like Soldiers in Battle, we are not ſenſible of the Wound, juſt at the moment of its being given. But, when the Heat of Action is over; then, like Them too, we grow Stiff and full of Anguiſh. The Fluſh of our Spirits cools, and the Gaiety of our falſe Expectations forſakes us. We begin to ſee the Fact as it really is; ſtript of all thoſe counterfeit Beauties, in which Senſuality and the Subtilty of the Tempter had dreſs'd it up to deceive us. And, upon a ſecond and ſober Recollection, nothing remains behind, but deformed Images of our Folly, and the ſmarting Scourges of a Self-condemning Breaſt.

And,

And, who is able to live under the Gnawings of this Worm? Were there no other Torture in Wickedneſs, but that of being eternally diſſatisfied with one's own ſelf, and the clamorous Reproaches which ſound from within; no Man of Reaſon and Ingenuity could long ſupport it: None could think any Advantages of Sin worth his Purchaſe, at ſo dear, and withal ſo unbecoming, ſo unmanly, a Price.

But, when the Matter does not end here; When *our Hearts* therefore *condemn us*, becauſe we have offended One, who is *greater than our Hearts*, and *knoweth all things*; One, who ſees a great deal, which We never obſerved; and punctually remembers many things, which We have long ſince forgotten; and conſiders diſtinctly each Aggravation of thoſe Crimes, which our Own Partiality hath, by all poſſible Artifice, laboured to ſoften and extenuate: When the Sentence we now paſs upon our guilty Selves, is but a Pledge and Anticipation of that future and final One, which ſhall be pronounced in Thunder by our angry Judge; And the preſent Horrors of a wounded Conſcience are ſo many Foretaſtes of the fruitleſs and endleſs Agonies of the Damn'd; When, I ſay, the Caſe ſtands thus with Sins unpardoned; no wonder, if ſuch Remembrances be grievous, and the Burthen of them intolerable. And yet this, and no better, is the Condition, to which a Habit of Vice indulged reduces Men. So bitter is the Reflection, ſo diſmal is the Proſpect, of an accuſing Mind; till thorough Repentance have made up the Breach, and God ſpeak Peace and Reconciliation to it. 1 John iii. 20.

It muſt be confeſſed, and it is but too ſad a Truth, that This is not the Caſe of every wicked Man. Many, even of the moſt Profligate, are utter Strangers to theſe Terrors, and commit the vileſt things, without any Remorſe at all. St. *Paul* inſtructs us, how to account

count for their doing ſo; when he ſays, 1 Tim. iv. 2. *their Conſciences are ſeared with an hot Iron*, Epheſ. iv. 19. and, that they have ſo hardened themſelves by Cuſtom, *as to be paſt feeling*. If therefore Some work all *Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*; If they Glory and Triumph in their Shame; Does this proceed from the Safety? No, but from the Stupidity, of their Souls. Yet theſe are the Wretches, that inſult Religion and its Miniſters; that often rejoice in, and boaſt of, ſuch Inſenſibility, as a Mark of their Happineſs and Native Freedom. Vain abſurd Men! Why do ye not (for ye might with equal Reaſon) extol the peculiar Happineſs of an Apoplexy, and the profound Tranquillities of a Lethargy? In all theſe Caſes, Eaſe is equally the Symptom of Miſery and Danger: For, till the Patient be awaken'd into Tenderneſs and Smart, there is no Hope, no Poſſibility of a Cure. A Wounded Spirit is certainly very grievous, and hard to bear; but even the painfulleſt of thoſe Wounds will bring more true Comfort at laſt, and are infinitely rather to be choſen, than that ſottiſh Hardineſs, which ſays of Guilt in general, as *Solomon's* Prov. xxiii. 35. *Drunkard* ſaid of his Wine; They *have ſtricken me, and I was not ſick*; They *have beaten me, and I felt it not: When ſhall I awake? I will ſeek it yet again.*

3. The *Third* Burthen, which I preſume to be intimated here, was ſaid to be, That Suffering and Diſquiet of Heart, which may ariſe from the Afflictions of the preſent World. The greateſt and moſt Proſperous of the Sons of Men are in no Degree exempted from the Power of Providence: but feel in their Fortunes ſurpriſing Changes, and frequent Interruptions. Diſeaſes and Pains in their own Perſons, Hazards and Loſſes in their Eſtates, Diſappointments in their moſt promiſing Hopes and Undertakings, Parting with the moſt uſeful of their Friends, and the deareſt of their Relations;

Relations; And a thouſand, and ten thouſand, Melancholy Events, which no Prudence can prevent, no Sagacity can foreſee, and conſequently no wit of Man can particularly deſcribe. Some or other of theſe do more or leſs chequer the Life of every one of us. Theſe, there is no Remedy, but bear we muſt: And well it were, if all of us could bring ourſelves to bear them, as we ought. The great Misfortune is, that, when theſe fall in with a black heavy Blood, weak Minds, or very tender Natures; the Impreſſion is too ſtrong. Life it ſelf grows a Burthen, and all its Comforts are ſoured and ſwallowed up, by ſome too over-bearing Reſentment of Grief. And indeed even They, who are moſt happy, both in their Circumſtances, and their Conſtitutions, do find the Mixture of Sweets in their Cup, or (which, in regard of the Point before us, comes much to one) the manner at leaſt of their taſting and being affected with Theſe, greatly overpower'd by that of their Bitter part.

If then we view Mankind in this Melancholy Poſition; Expoſed to infinite Sufferings and Temptations; Puſhed on to ſenſual Pleaſures by ſtrong Appetites, not to be gratify'd with Safety; Violently averſe to many Difficulties, which Reaſon and Honour forbid them to decline; Liable to daily and hourly Alterations; And much more ſenſibly moved with every Change from Better to Worſe; Deſtitute, Afflicted, Tormented; And all, without the Notices of any other State, or the Support of a Compenſation to be made hereafter; Where ſhall we find a Creature more truly pitiable?

I am not now conſidering, what Reliefs might be had from thoſe Privileges, by which Humane Nature is ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſhed; ſuppoſing every Man to make the beſt, that can poſſibly be made, of Reaſon and Conſideration. But I take Men, as we find them, and as They commonly order the Matter. And thus I

may be bold to ask, What those Privileges are, generally, in Fact, and in the Event; but so many fresh Instruments of new, unnecessary, and more grievous Troubles. Brutes are indeed a great deal beneath us in Dignity and Capacity; but are they not manifestly beneath us, in several Aggravations of Suffering also? They feel the Present, and they feel That only. Their Evils are all of Nature's and God's sending. They do not fear what they cannot foresee. And, when their Pains have done, They have done with them! And how supportable is This, in Comparison of that, which the Generality of Mankind endure, whose most and worst Troubles are not the Work of Providence, but their own! They chew the Cud of every unpalatable Morsel, renew their Calamities by sad Reflections upon them, when past and gone, but forget the Numberless Blessings that should balance These. Are ever looking forward, scaring themselves with distant Possibilities, and lose all Sense of present Good, by ghastly Images of Evils, that never come to pass at all. Thus are Reason and Memory turn'd upon our Selves, and made our constant Executioners. As if the Privative of Mankind consisted only in a greater Dexterity to rack and torment themselves, than any other Creature here below is made capable of.

What Reliefs then shall wretched Mortals find, so qualified by Nature, so industrious by the Abuse of their Faculties, to contrive their own Misery and perpetual Disquiet? Will the Sense of a God and Providence, and those Improvements of Reason, commonly called Natural Religion, administer Comfort and Relief? Not in any degree. These only add Weight to the Burthen, by representing our Troubles and Calamities, as the Dispoals of a Power above us. For, whatever might be said of his Wisdom, Good Men in Affliction could have slender Confidence in his Justice, or Benignity. A blind Chance were, to Such, more

more eligible, than a Governor that sees and knows, but does not distinguish in his Distributions. Bad Men indeed could not accuse him of Iniquity: But would That make their Punishment one whit the more tolerable? Surely it is not, nor ever can be, a Mitigation of our Sufferings, to know we have deserved to suffer. Quite contrary: It is the last and highest Aggravation, by adding the Sense of Guilt to that of Pain, and pointing all our Adversities, with the Goads and Stings of a restless upbraiding Conscience.

So would the Case stand with Natural Religion; and the Jewish could not mend the matter. For, in a Law expressly covenanting (as that did) for Temporal Mercies and Judgments, the State of each Man's Fortunes would be expected to hold Proportion with his Deserts. Consequently, the more firm Persuasion of the Truth of God any Man entertain'd, the more uncomfortable must every severe Dispensation be to that Man; because carrying the Signature of a Wise and Righteous God, angry, and avenging some proportionable Provocation. And how dark, how dismal these Apprehensions are, how full of Horror and Amazement, all who have felt them know. And We, who are God's Ministers, too frequently can see it, in Them, whose disorder'd Spirits and Religious Melancholy confound even Piety and Virtue itself, with the bare borrow'd Form of Guilt, and imaginary Terrors of Despair.

Such was the Condition of Mankind before Christ; Such it is still without Christ. Which, methinks, should prevail with all Men most passionately to desire a Remedy for so complicated a Misery. And, where This may be found, I now proceed to shew, by observing under my

2. *Second* Head, What Cures and Comforts the sincere Obedience of Christ and his Gospel administers to Each of the Griefs and Burthens, already specified under the *First* Head.

1. And here it is fit I begin with the Jewish Law: The Burthen whereof is happily removed, and our thankful Acknowledgments for its being so are due, upon these following Accounts.

1. As its Laborious Ceremonies are abolished, and in Their stead an easy and rational Service required at our Hands, A Worship in Spirit and Truth; The Practice of noble and beneficial Virtues; Worthy the Majesty of God to accept, Worthy the Dignity of Men to pay; and such, as sufficiently recommend themselves to the sober Sense and Judgment of every considering Person.

2. A Second Instance of our Happiness in this respect, is the Provision made against the Inefficacy of the Legal Sacrifices, by the One, the Universal, the Perfect and Sufficient Oblation of the Lamb of God: The Lamb, who alone could take away Sin: The Lamb, who once offer'd takes away the Sins of the whole World; The Lamb, of which those under the Law were Types and Shadows, and derived all their Worth and Title to Acceptance from prefiguring Him.

3. The Rigour of that Law is also remitted, by changing the Obedience of Works into that of Faith: By making gracious Allowances, and large Abatements, for unavoidable Accidents and Infirmities; and by receiving Men upon Terms consistent with frail and corrupt Nature. By proposing to all Sinners truly penitent, and to all Good Men sincere in their Endeavours, that They shall be justified by the Merits of Another, who could not have any of their Own, to expect that Blessing from.

Upon the whole matter then, The Gospel, though a Yoke, is a gentle and easy Yoke, in Comparison of That shaken off and exchanged for it. The Covenant now struck with Mankind accommodates itself to our Capacities; It is possible to every honest and willing

willing Mind; It treats us with more Respect; No longer as Servants, but as Children, nay as Heirs: It is also established upon more glorious Promises: Not the Inheritance of an Earthly *Canaan*, or Abundance of Corn and Wine; but of Joys exalted and refined: Figured to us indeed by *eating and drinking with our Heavenly Father in his Kingdom*; but in Reality, suitable to the utmost Desires of a Rational and Immortal Soul; Even the Ravishing Delights of His Presence, with whom there are Pleasures unconceivable, inexhaustible *Rivers of Pleasure for evermore.* Psal. xvi. 11.

2. The Next Advantage to be considered, is That, which the Christian Religion brings to Them, who are grieved and wearied with the Burthen of their own Sins. Now the fundamental Point of this Religion is a Saviour and Redeemer. One, who is the Beloved, the Only Begotten Son of God, and therefore He must needs be able; One, who came into the World for that very purpose, *that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life*, and therefore He cannot but be willing doubtless, *to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him.* John iii. 16. Heb. vii. 25. One, who hath *washed* us in *his own Blood*, Rev. i. 5. *nailed the Hand-writing that was against Us to his Cross, and triumphed over Sin in his Death.* Coloss. ii. 14, 15. One, who, we are perfectly assured, hath effected all this, in that God raised him from the Dead. For nothing, less than the full Payment of our Debt, could have rendered the detaining him in the Grave impossible. And therefore the Justice of God, when opening the Prison, and releasing our Surety, did by that very Act acknowledge Satisfaction. To be baptized, to believe, to repent, to engage, and to live, as become Christians; This is still, and this is all, left upon

upon Us to do. And, though all our Actions will continue imperfect, and too many of them may happen to be very impure; yet ſtill there is Mercy to pardon, ſtill there is Grace to aſſiſt. And to Them, who are careful not to abuſe Theſe, are thoſe peaceful Voices ſounding from above, *My Strength is made perfect in Weakneſs*, and *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee.*

2 Cor. xii. 9. Matt. ix. 2.

The Terrors of Satan may poſſibly diſturb, and the Miſtakes of a timorous Mind, wrought up by an unhappy Complexion, may ſometimes deject, even ſuch good Men as Theſe. But, ſo long as they give Diligence heartily to bewail all involuntary, and to avoid all preſumptuous Wickedneſs; They may accoſt their tumultuous Spirits in *David*'s Soliloquy, *Why art thou ſo ſad, O my Soul, and why are thou ſo diſquieted within me? Still put thy Truſt in God.* For, as one better inſtructed than *David* argues, *Who ſhall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who alſo maketh Interceſſion for us.* He hears our every Sigh and Groan, is Conſcious to every penſive Thought, puts thoſe our Mourners *muſh their Beds*, interpoſes his own Blood and Sufferings, ſcreens the trembling Penitent from the Juſtice of an Angry God, and brings him before a reconciled and tender Father. A Father, whoſe Bowels yearn over the Miſeries, which his ungracious Children bring upon themſelves; And a Father, always ready to receive with open Arms, the moſt prodigal and loſt of all his Sons, when they abandon their Extravagance, and come back to Him and their Duty. This is our Rock,

Pſal. xlii. 5.

Rom. viii. 33, 34.

Pſal. vi. 6.

Rock, the Refuge and Confidence of frail and guilty People, That, if we be *Sinners*, we are such, as Christ came into the World to save. That no Offences can be so enormous, which His Propitiation is not more than equivalent for; no Sickness so desperate, but This Spiritual Physician is able to heal it. And they are the Diseased, they are the Polluted, that he comes to. They are the *Weary*, They are the *Heavy laden*, whom he calls. And He would not bid them come, if he were not willing to receive them. He, that invites in general Terms, does not exclude the Worst; and the Worst, provided they be *weary*, sensible of their Burthen, and desirous to be eased of it, shall not be thought unworthy of Refreshment, and support, and Deliverance.

1 Tim. i. 15.

3. *Lastly*, Those Disquiets, which arise from Worldly Afflictions, are likewise most effectually asswaged and healed by the Doctrine and Service of Christ. For it is the peculiar Glory of the Gospel, to have brought *Life and Immortality to light*; and, by establishing the Certainty of One to come, to have given us a right Understanding of the State we are now in. Hence we learn to distinguish, between a transient Condition of Discipline and Trial, and one of Duration and final Retribution. Hence, that the Season of Rewards and Punishments, strictly so called, is not yet; nor the Fate of Men fix'd and absolutely determin'd here below. Consequently, that no certain Judgment can be made, of our Selves, or of Others, from the different Fortunes now dispensed to them; Nor any peremptory Sentence pass'd, whom God loves, or whom he hates, by any thing, or by all the things, that are at present before us. The same Adversity may be, to One the Blow of an Enemy, and to Another the Chastisement of a Father: To One meant for a Scourge of his Vices, to Another an Exercise of his Virtues: To Both very serviceable,

2 Tim. i. 10.

in order to present Improvement, and to future Happiness. And therefore it is easy to discern how it may consist very well, not only with the Justice, but even with the Mercy of God, to afflict the Best of Men: In regard no Life is so unblameable, as not to deserve some Correction, nor any Example of Piety yet so bright, as not to be capable of still greater Lustre.

Now, when these Reflections have been duly made, (Which to be sure they have not, till we are seriously convinced, that all Events are disposed by One who is wiser than We: One, who sees and weighs our Circumstances thoroughly; One, who loves us infinitely, and seeks all Occasions to do us Good:) We then have a Comfort solid, and adequate to the severest of his Appointments concerning us. And this is a Comfort, peculiar to Christianity; Because no other Institution ever did, or could, set the Demerits of Sinners, the Love of God to Mankind, and our Hopes of Bliss immortal, in their true Light. The utmost, that Philosophy can pretend to upon this Occasion, is in the very worst Sense of the Poet's Terms, *Verba & Voces*, Words only, and empty Sounds in Comparison. For ten thousand such Volumes, as *Seneca* and *Epictetus*, can never lie so close at our Hearts, or give that sweet Repose to Spirits in Perplexity, as this single Text from St. *Paul* rightly applied would do: *Our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

2 Cor. iv. 17.

I ought not to leave this Head, without adding, that, To prevent all Disappointment or Mistake in our Expectations from the Promise in my Text, we must proceed with some Distinction, concerning the Burthens severally spoken to. That of the Jewish Law is indeed quite taken off. But from the Other Two we are not totally delivered. We must therefore think our Lord as good as his Word, if at present we be strengthened

thereby *against* Sin, and supported *under* Affliction. The Son of God himself, who is our Pattern, had his Temptations, and his Agonies. And his Example will direct us, how to interpret his Promise, when Either of these Cases happens to be Ours. He had the Ministry of Angels in Both; We in Proportion have leave to depend upon a mighty, though invisible Assistance; The Protection of God's Providence, the Presence of his Grace to sustain and defend, to strengthen and rescue Us. A peaceful Conscience; a Mind contented, even, and serene; A lively Faith, stedfast Trust, and cheerful Hope. In These is the Repose of a good Man, while Mortality detains him here below. But the time is drawing on, when such as come to Christ shall actually cease from Sin, and be at perfect Rest from the Labours and Troubles of Life. For the Seeds of Immortality are already sown, and have taken Root, though they cannot bring Fruit to Maturity, except we die. And nothing can go higher than This: No Calamity can, in the Reason of the thing, be a Match for that Comfort, which is qualified to reconcile us even to Death, and can disarm that last grim Adversary of all his Sting and Terror. And this is done to every good Christian, by rendering his Grave a Passage to Light and Bliss, and the Separation of Soul and Body an Expedient, necessary to consummate the Happiness of Both.

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin MARY.

The COLLECT.

WE beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy Grace into our Hearts; that, as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the Message of an Angel; so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the Glory of his Resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Luke i. 26, &c. Matt. i. 20, &c. Rom. iv. 25. vi. 5.

For

For the Epistle. Isai. vii. 10.

PARAPHRASE.

10, 11. God, knowing that *Ahaz* would not rely upon the Promise made, &c. gave him, by *Isaiah*, Choice of any Miracle he would name, which should be wrought in Confirmation of it.

10. Moreover the Lord spake again unto *Ahaz*, saying,

11. *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, Ver. 7.* *ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.*

12, 13. This Indulgence *Ahaz*, refused to make the Experiment of. Not because he believed without it; but because he had no Confidence in, or Value for it.

12. *But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.*

13. Hereupon the Prophet concerns himself no farther with *Ahaz*, but addresses to the People of *Judah*, and Descendents of *David* in general. First, by rebuking their Infidelity under the present Fear and Consternation; as an Injury and Affront, not only to Him, who was God's Minister, but to God himself.

13. *And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*

14. And then, by foretelling the *Messiah*'s miraculous Birth of a Virgin; in whom the Favour and Presence of God with his People should be so conspicuous, as to deserve the Title of *Immanuel*, or *God with us*, in a most eminent and altogether peculiar Sense and Manner.

14. *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.*

15. And yet this Divine Person should condescend to be Very Man; and should give Evidence of his being Such, by being nourished, and growing up to Maturity of Understanding, like common Children. See *Luke* ii. 40, 51, 52.

15. *Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good.*

COMMENT.

THE proper Scriptures, now offered to our Meditation, exactly answer the Design of this Festival. The Mercy it commemorates, being in the *Epistle* with great Solemnity foretold, And, in the *Gospel* for the Day, related with very particular Circumstances, as punctually accomplished. The Consequence of the thing itself, and therefore of Our Belief of it, must needs

needs be very great: By reaſon it lets us into a Knowledge of the firſt Act, whereby the Son of God vouchſafed to empty himſelf for our ſakes. In that Act it reveals a Myſtery of *God made Man*: Upon which the whole Scheme of the Chriſtian Religion ſeems principally to turn. Hence all avowed Adverſaries of the Faith have with opened Malice attacked, and all the Corrupters of it have, with Subtlety and diſſembled Friendſhip, endeavoured to ſubvert, the Article of our Bleſſed Saviour's miraculous Incarnation.

My Deſign, at preſent, is to eſtabliſh this Truth: Not by induſtriouſly entering into an Examination of the Arguments brought againſt it; but by ſuch an Illuſtration of the Prophecy in the Old, compared with its Application in the New Teſtament, as may ſuffice to ſettle our own Minds; and, if well attended to, will alſo be a good Guard againſt the falſe Reaſonings of Others.

To this Purpoſe it will be requiſite for me to conſider

I. *Firſt*, The Occaſion of this Prophecy: And

II. *Secondly*, The Subſtance of the Prophecy itſelf.

I. Rightly to underſtand the Occaſion of this Prophecy, We muſt take a ſhort View of the Time, and Juncture of Affairs, in which it was delivered. Now the Hiſtory informs us, that, about the end of *Jotham*'s Reign, the Kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael* enter'd into Deſigns againſt the People of *Judah*. Which yet God did not ſuffer to be put in Execution, till *Ahaz*, whoſe Wickedneſs rendered him a notorious Object of Divine Vengeance, ſucceeded into the Throne. Then each of theſe Enemies were ſuffered to prevail. Great Multitudes were carried Captive to *Damaſcus* by *Rezin*; and, in an Engagement with *Pekah* King of *Iſrael*, the King of *Judah*'s Son, ſome of

2 Kings xv. 37.

2 Chro. xxviii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

the

the Principal Officers, and a hundred thousand Men, were slain in one Day; and two hundred thousand Women carried Captive. After this, (for so it is very probably judged, by comparing together the Accounts given in the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, and by placing the Actions according to the Order in the Margin) the Kings of *Israel* and *Syria* agreed to come upon *Judah*, with a Confederate Army. The Apprehension of those Powers in Conjunction, which had, when encounter'd singly, been found too strong for them, created that general Consternation in the King and People of *Judah*, which the Prophet at the *Second* of this Chapter elegantly resembles, by *the Trees of the Wood bending and trembling with the Wind*. Against these Terrors it was, that God sent *Isaiah* to support them. Which he does, *First* by a Promise, that the Designs of the Enemy should be disappointed: And that They, who, when made Executioners of Divine Vengeance, could each of them separately overcome; Now, when presuming to act without such Commission, should not, with all their Force united, be able to prevail. *Then* he foretels the Downfal of their Adversaries; And sets a Period, within which time Destruction should happen to both the Kings, then besieging *Jerusalem*.

2 King. xv. 37. 2 Chron. xxviii. 1, to 16. 2 Kings xvi. 5 to 10. Isa. vii. 1. 2 Chron. xxviii. 16, 20, &c. 2 Kings xvi. 10 to 19. 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Isa. vii. 7. Ver. 1. 2 Kings xvi. 5. Ver. 9. Ver. 16.

For these Events (which came accordingly to pass in very few Years after) the wicked King gave no Credit to the Prophet. And that Incredulity occasioned the Profer, made at the 11th Verse. But *Ahaz*, who had forsaken God, and put all his Confidence in the King of *Assyria*'s Help, refuses any Miracle, for the Establishment of a

Risen 1740 years since, about three, and the Kingdom of Israel broken, according to Grot. eleven, to Usher, seventy Years after.

Faith,

Faith, which he had abandon'd. And therefore the Prophet proceeds to make a Promise (not now, to Him in particular, but to the Family and People of *David* in general) of the miraculous Birth of the *Messiah*. Which, though it were not to be accomplished in, as yet, Seven Hundred Years, did however very well become the present Occasion, and minister proper Comfort in those melancholy Circumstances, upon the following Considerations.

1. As the *Messiah* was the Greatest and most Wonderful, the Sum and Complement indeed, of all the Mercies, designed by God, and expected by his People: He, *in whom all the Promises are* (as the Apostle speaks) *Yea and Amen*. This seems a good Reason, why, after the mention of any dreadful Danger or Calamity, the Prophets do so often break out into Predictions and glorious Characters of Him: That so the Faith and Prospect of such a Happiness in reserve might be a support under All, whether private or publick Adversities, with which God might see fit, in the mean while, to chastise their Faults, and to exercise their Patience. 2 Cor. 1. 20.

2. But the mention of these Promises was not only a reasonable Comfort under Sufferings; It was also a powerful Argument of Hope for Succour and Deliverance. This must needs be the natural Effect of such Predictions, as gave the utmost Assurance of the Power and the Goodness of God. How then could any Danger or Distress reasonably drive Men to despair, whose Minds were thoroughly possess'd with a Belief and Expectation of this Redeemer; in whom so many Miracles should meet, as must appear equal at least to any Difficulties, possible for his Servants to be oppress'd with? One, in whom Blessings, so numerous and unspeakable should be poured out, that the Love of God could no more admit of any Doubt, than his Power? Consequently, when the Face of Affairs look'd blackest,

and

and no glimpse of Comfort appeared from humane and ordinary Assistances; No more effectual Expedient could be thought of, to buoy up their Spirits, and confirm their Trust in God, than the opening a View of that Deliverance, intended by the *Messiah*. A Deliverance, so much superior to any Other, that the Author of it could not be supposed to want either Ability or Inclination, to do Less in any present Exigence, who had irrevocably determined, and firmly engaged, in his own due Time, to do infinitely More for his People.

3. But especially This Promise was adapted to the present Conjuncture, and had a direct Tendency to compose the Consternation and Terrors, at that time upon the Minds of the People. The Danger that now threatened, was on many Accounts so formidable; The Enemy without, so flush'd with Conquest; and the Besieged within, so dispirited with former Disasters; that nothing less was apprehended, than the utter Extermination of the Race of *Judah*, and final Overthrow of their Constitution. Now a Prediction of the *Messiah*'s Birth met directly with all such melancholy Misgivings; and was an Argument against them, stronger and more unanswerable, in proportion as the Time of that Birth was at greater Distance from the Time of this Prediction. The Reason of this Assertion will soon appear, to any who recollect, that the *Messiah*, who had formerly been spoken of in Terms more general, was afterwards described as a Descendant of *Judah*: That the Time of his Coming was positively fixed, while that Tribe should continue distinct, and a Form of Government yet kept up in it: That he was also to be of the Lineage of *David*, whose Family are here particularly address'd to: That these Prerogatives that Tribe and Family were well apprised of, and placed their peculiar Glory and Happiness in them; That

Gen. xlix. 10.

Psal. lxxxix. --- cxxxii.

That *Israel* was not under the same Expectation or Claim; and therefore a determinate and short Period is here expresly set for the Dissolution of Their State. That a nobler Difference could not have been put between *Infidel* and *Judaism*, than, after the final and speedy Ruin denounced against the One, so solemnly to assure the Other of a Mercy so remote. And the Consequence of all must come to this at last, That every Attempt could not but be vain, for extinguishing that People, and rooting out that Family, in this Day of Distress, To whom such Privileges were peculiarly annexed and irreversibly decreed, that God could not be consistent with his Word and most solemn Engagements, if he did not rescue them out of This and all Other Calamities, and preserve them unbroken, for at least Seven Hundred Years longer. For so much intervened between *Isaiah*'s Prophecy in the Epistle, and the Accomplishment of it in the Gospel, of the Festival, which we are now upon that Account celebrating.

I have done with my *First* Head, The Occasion, and come now to consider, in the

II. *Second* place, The Substance, of this Prophecy. Where we shall do well to observe,

1. The Thing promised, *The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son.*

2. The Distinction, whereby he should be known, in those Words, *And shall call his Name Immanuel.*

Lastly, The Importance of that last Clause, *Butter and Honey shall he eat, that he may*, or, until he, *know to refuse the Evil and choose the Good.*

The Two Former of these Particulars St. *Matthew* hath taught all Christians how to apply. For, after an Account of the Birth of *Jesus*, of his Mother's Espousal to *Joseph*, The Discovery of her being with Child before they came together, The Disquiet of her Husband's Mind upon

Chap. I. 18, 19, 20, 21.

upon that Occaſion, the Compoſure of thoſe Troubles by the Appearance of an Angel, vindicating the Virgin's Innocence, and declaring that which was conceived in her to be of the Holy Ghoſt: He adds, as a farther Confirmation of theſe ſurprizing Circumſtances,

Ver. 22, 23. *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was ſpoken of the Lord, by the Prophet, ſaying; Behold a Virgin ſhall be with Child, and ſhall bring forth a Son, and they ſhall call his Name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.* I ſhall briefly treat of the Particulars above ſpecified, in ſuch manner, as may ſhew, that they do not only juſtify, but do ſo oblige to this Application, as to forbid, and be incompatible with any other.

With regard then to the *Firſt* Particular, the Sign promiſed, theſe Two Remarks are obvious.

1. That the Thing ſpoken of in the Words, muſt have come to paſs, after the time of ſpeaking them. For, though the Verbs uſed in the Original be of the preſent Time, yet is this only a Figure, frequent in Prophetick Writings, to denote the undoubted Certainty of the Matter: And a Style proper for Him to intimate this Power and Truth by, *Who* (as the Apoſtle takes notice) *calleth thoſe things which be not, as though they were.* To this Style of the Prophets the Reaſon of the thing, and, conſequent to both, the univerſal Conſent of Expoſitors of all Ages and Perſuaſions, do exactly agree. The only Matter in diſpute hath been, at what Diſtance the Accompliſhment might be allowed to follow. Whether it be not neceſſary to the Nature and End of a Sign, to be ſucceeded by that Event, in the Belief whereof it was intended to confirm Men; And whether, We Chriſtians, in applying this Prediction to our Bleſſed Lord's Incarnation, (an Event ſeven hundred Years off) do not enervate the Prophet's Argument, and utterly evacuate the Uſe of That, which was given as the Sign of Events, part whereof

Rom. iv. 17.

whereof happen'd in One or Two, and the Whole within few Years after.

This muſt be confeſs'd an Objection, that carries ſome Appearance of Strength. But the Difficulty vaniſhes, when it is remembered, 1. That the Word *Sign* is, in both Teſtaments, made uſe of, not only concerning ſuch Events, as ſignify ſome others to come after them; but concerning all that are Extraordinary and Miraculous; without the leaſt relation to, or dependence upon, Any beſides. Again, 2. Even in caſe of ſuch relation and mutual dependance, it is in this Senſe ſufficient to make One thing the Sign of Another, that the One do ſo neceſſarily imply the Certainty of the Other; that, if the Sign do, the Thing ſignified cannot but, come to paſs. And for This it is of no Importance, Whether of the Two be antecedent, or Whether of them ſubſequent; The Strength of the Motive to Belief lying, not in the Order of Time at all; but wholly in the neceſſary Connexion of the Events themſelves, and in the grounds They miniſter, for raiſing and confirming our Faith, according to the Conſequences, evidently to be drawn from the One to the Other.

And, As the Reaſon of the Thing, ſo is the Authority of the Scripture with us, in this Point. I will juſt mention an Example or Two, that you may ſee, the Paſſage before us is not ſingular. God, ſpeaking to *Moſes* out of the flaming Buſh in *Horeb*, promiſes his People a Deliverance from their Bondage, and commands Him to be the Inſtrument of it, by carrying a Meſſage to *Pharoah*. *Moſes* declines the Office, as too great for Him to undertake; and deſires ſome Evidence of its ſucceeding in his Hands. To remove this Diffidence, he is anſwered by God in the following Words, *Certainly I will be with thee, and this ſhall be a Token unto thee, that I have ſent thee; when thou haſt brought forth the* Exod. iii. 10, 11, 12.

People out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this Mountain. Again, When, shortly after the Calamity now before us, *Hezekiah* was insulted by the Messengers of *Senacherib*, and in no Condition to defend himself; God promises not to suffer so much as a Siege to be laid against *Jerusalem*. Which was performed effectually, the very Night following, by a wonderful Slaughter of the *Assyrians*, who fell under the Hand of an Angel. The Suddenness of which Accomplishment notwithstanding, He adds, *And this shall be a Sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this Year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second Year, that which springeth of the same; and in the third Year, sow ye, and reap, and plant Vineyards, and eat the Fruits thereof.* If then the worshipping God in *Horeb* was foretold as a Sign of *Moses* his Mission to rescue *Israel* out of *Egypt*; though it neither did, nor could, come to pass, till after their Rescue from thence: If the Plenty of three successive Years is made a Sign of a Deliverance, which yet follow'd in less than so many Days after the Promise of it: Then it is plain, that to foretel a more remote Event, as a Sign of one near at hand, is not against the Course of Prophetick Scripture. Consequently the Birth of *Christ* being made a Sign of *Judah*'s Deliverance from the present Attempts of *Israel* and *Syria*, As it is agreeable to the Reason of the thing, So is it likewise supported by Examples of the like nature, in the Book of God. We are not therefore chargeable with Absurdity, or Dishonesty, for fixing upon this Interpretation. We insist, that, though the Order, in which Each shall come, be not necessary; yet it is absolutely so, that both the Thing promised, and the Sign, should be subsequent to the Promise. And from hence we infer, by unavoidable Consequence, that by the Child, whose Birth is here foretold in the Reign of *Ahaz*, could not possiby be meant his

2 Kings xix. 29. Isa. xxxvii. 30.

his Son *Hezekiah*. For he ſucceeded his Father, after a Reign of ſixteen Years, and was himſelf then, but five and twenty Years old. Therefore the Abſurdity and Perverſion lies all on their ſide, who ſeek to elude this Prophecy by applying it to *Hezekiah*. That is, indeed, to make it foretel a Child yet to be born, who had been born, at leaſt nine or ten Years, before the Words were ſpoken.

2 Kings xvi. 2. — xviii. 2.

2. The *Second* Remark, which I take to be alſo a very obvious one, is, That the Birth here foretold, is of an extraordinary and miraculous kind. And Such we believe our Bleſſed Lord's to have been; who alone anſwer'd the Character here given of him, by having a Virgin Mother. This ſtricteſt Interpretation of the Place, as it beſt agrees with the Etymology and general Uſe of the Original Word, which we render *Virgin*; So is it eſpecially enforced by the Circumſtances of the Context. For, after the refuſal of *Ahaz to aſk a Sign of God, either in the height or depth*, in Confirmation of a Promiſe, thought too great to be credible; the Prophet here gives the Houſe of *David* this Sign, of a Virgin conceiving and bearing a Son. Hence it is evident, that the Uſe of Signs is to awaken Mens Obſervation, and to add Life and Vigour to their Faith in difficult Caſes. And how ſhall this be done, but by conſiſting of Events, out of the common way of Expectation? Such, as tranſcend the Power of Natural Cauſes and Effects, and plainly demonſtrate an Interpoſition of the Almighty's own Hand? But, if no more be meant here, than, what the Jews would make us believe, that a young Woman, then a Virgin, ſhould be joyned to a Man, and be with Child: What is there in all this, fit to compoſe the Houſe of *David*'s Fears, in that Day of Conſternation and Diſtreſs? How could an ordinary and natural Event aſſure an unexpected and extraordinary Deliverance? But eſpecially, How ridi-

culous, (upon this Suppoſal) how extremely trifling, is all that Pomp and Solemnity, with which this Prophecy is introduced? Surely that Preface, *Hear ye now, O Houſe of David*, &c. *The Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign*; and that awakening of their Attention, *Behold a Virgin*, &c. do import, not only ſome ſtrange and ſupernatural Effect, but one, that ſhould be more full of Aſtoniſhment, than any that *Ahaz* could have aſked. And hence I take it to be very manifeſt, that this Prophecy cannot be confined to the Son of the Propheteſs, or to any Other, born after the manner of Men; and, that it never was fulfilled truly, and in the Senſe of Him that gave it, except in the Event, which we are now thanking God for; The miraculous Conception and Birth of Jeſus Chriſt alone.

II. I paſs now, *Secondly*, to the Diſtinction peculiar to this wonderful Child, in thoſe Words, and *ſhalt call his Name Immanuel.* Could any Streſs fairly be laid upon the Words *ſhall call*; I ſhould think it another Intimation of a truly Virgin-Mother, by lodging in Her that Power of naming the Child, Which, by the Laws and Cuſtoms of the Jews, was always the Father's Prerogative. But I think it cannot be deny'd that *Thou ſhalt*, or *She ſhall call*, in the Prophet; and, *Thou ſhall*, or *They ſhall call*, in the Evangeliſts, are Terms exactly equivalent: And in general, that ſuch Forms are frequently of no other Importance, than that, which at laſt reſolves it ſelf into a paſſive Signification. Of this many Inſtances might eaſily be produced, which muſt abundantly ſatisfy us, that the meaning of this Paſſage is properly thus much, *His Name ſhall be called Immanuel.*

Iſa. vii. 14.
Matth. i. 21, 23.
Luke i. 31.

It is of more weight to ſhew, how this part of the Prediction can belong to Him, whoſe Name we acknowledge to have been, by expreſs Command from Heaven, called *Jeſus.*

Luke i. 31.
— ii. 21.
Matth. i. 21.

Jeſus. Now nothing is more common in Scripture, than, by the calling or naming of a Perſon or Thing, to mean that the Perſon or Thing ſhall really be what that Name imports: And ſo again, *being called* ſtands generally for *being*. In the Former Senſe we find it foretold of *Jeruſalem* by this Prophet, that ſhe ſhould be called *the City of Righteouſneſs*. Why, Becauſe, as was promiſed in the Words foregoing, *God would reſtore her Judges, as at the firſt, and her Counſellors, as at the beginning*. Iſai. i. 26.

In the Latter Senſe it is twice uſed by the Angel, in the Goſpel for this Day: Who ſays of Jeſus, that *he ſhall be great*, and *ſhall be called* (that is ſhall be) *the Son of the Higheſt*; and again, *that Holy Thing which ſhall be born of Thee, ſhall be called* (that is again, *ſhall be*) the Son of God. Luke i. 32. *Ver.* 35.

Without proving this therefore by a Multitude of Inſtances, which might make it endleſs; or recurring to the Critical Diſtinctions of Natural and Inſtituted Names, which a Learned Writer of our own hath ſhewed to be in this Caſe frivolous and prevaricating; it ſhall ſuffice to ſay, that, according to the Uſage of the Jewiſh, more eſpecially the Prophetick Language, the Name of a Perſon or Thing ſo called, imported only ſuch Qualities or Effects, in or from it, as that Name ſignified. And by Conſequence, that Chriſt's Name was truly and ſtrictly called *Immanuel*, in full and punctual Completion of this Prophecy, if he were *God with us*, (which is the adequate Meaning of the *Hebrew* Word) in ſo diſtinguiſhing a manner, as None beſides ever was, or can be. *Biſhop* Kidder *on the Meſſias*, P. I. Ch. I. P. II. Ch. V.

Now, (not to mention that Preſence of God, whereby he is in every Place, and with every Perſon, and which cannot be the Meaning of the Name we are

conſidering) there is a Preſence of Favour and Diſtinction, whereby God is ſaid to be, in a peculiar manner, with thoſe, whom he loves and bleſſes above others. In this regard the Child here ſpoken of is juſtly called *Emanuel*; Becauſe, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *God was in Him reconciling the World to himſelf*; for his Sake and *Sufferings not imputing their Treſpaſſes unto them*; and again, By Him They, who *were ſometimes afar off are made nigh, have acceſs to the Father, are accepted in the Beloved*, and become, of Enemies and Strangers, Friends and Children; inſomuch that God vouchſafes to dwell in us, and be One with us. And, as he unites us to himſelf by Grace, ſo did he in this Child condeſcend, by an ineffable Generation, to unite our Subſtance and Nature to himſelf: To be *perfect God, and perfect Man*, that ſo he *might be the Firſt-born among many Brethren, and redeem the Children from Death, who are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, by himſelf taking part of the ſame.* Let it not then be any more objected, that the Child in this Prophecy could not be called *Emanuel*, whom we confeſs to have been called *Jeſus*; for he is therefore our *Emanuel*, becauſe our *Jeſus*; therefore moſt eminently, moſt literally, *God with us*, becauſe, by ſo miraculous an Union, a *Saver of his People from their Sins.*

2 Cor. v. 19.

Eph. ii. 13, 18, 19.

— i. 6.

Athen. Creed.

Rom. viii. 29.

Heb. ii. 14.

But (*Laſtly*) as the Name *Emanuel* leads us to contemplate the Reality of our Saviour's Divine Nature, ſo does the Deſcription, which follows, help us yet more to a thankful Senſe of his inimitable Condeſcenſion. For, by adding, *Butter and Honey ſhall he eat, that*, or until, *he know to refuſe the Evil and chooſe the Good*; the Prophet is reaſonably ſuppoſed to ſignify to us, not only the Reality of our Saviour's Human Nature; but all the Frailties and Infirmities of it, which

which might render him, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, in every point *like unto us*, Sin alone excepted. The firſt *Adam* was created in the utmoſt Maturity and Perfection both of Body and Mind, that any of the *Species* ever attained to; but the *Second Adam*, through *the Lord from Heaven*, vouchſafed to enter the World a tender Babe, ſtooped to the Weakneſſes of Infancy, and the gradual Progreſſions of Youth. His Body was nouriſhed with the Food, uſually adminiſtered in thoſe Countries to common Children; and his Underſtanding brightned like Theirs, and received Enlargements proportionable to his Years. So that *Iſaiah* here foretels, in other Terms, what St. *Luke* relates to have been exactly fulfilled; when acquainting us, that *the Child grew, and waxed ſtrong in Spirit, filled with Wiſdom*; and again, that *Jeſus increaſed in Wiſdom, and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.*

Heb. ii. 17. — iv. 15.

1 Cor. xv. 47.

Luke ii. 40, 52.

There are many uſeful Inferences ariſing from this Subject, which, having touched upon formerly, I forbear now to repeat. Let it therefore ſuffice at preſent, briefly to obſerve, the Reverence which becomes the Devotions appointed for, and the glorious Preeminence due to, this Happy Day. For This is the Day, that began firſt to ſcatter the thick Night of Ignorance and Error, and the Veil of Types and Shadows, in which till then Mankind were all involved. The Day, which of right begins our Eccleſiaſtical Year; Becauſe on It, the Redemption and true Life of Mankind was firſt put into Motion, by the Author and Giver of it taking our Subſtance, in the Womb of his Holy Mother. The Day, which, by this wonderful Operation, began to reconcile, not only God and Man, but the Word of God with itſelf; and is the common Centre of Agreement and Union, between the Old and the

Goſp. for Chriſtmas-Day, *and Sunday after* Chriſtmas.

New Teſtament. The Day, in ſhort, whoſe Honour it is, that, to the glorious Events ſet forward in it, the myſterious Proceedings of four thouſand Years had been made ſubſervient. And therefore, on this Day eſpecially, let us be glad, and rejoyce, and give Glory, and Praiſe, and humble Adoration, To God the Father, *creating this new thing*; To God the Son *Incarnate*; And to God the Holy Ghoſt *Overſhadowing*; Three Perſons, and one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Jer. xxxi. 22.

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

St. Luke i. 26.

26. In the ſixth Month after the Meſſage to *Zacharias*, and his Wife *Elizabeth*'s conceiving, as had been foretold (See *Ver.* 23, 24.) the ſame Angel (*Ver.* 19.) was ſent, &c.

26. *AND in the ſixth month, the angel Gabriel was ſent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,*

27. To a Virgin of the Family of *David*, after her Eſpouſals to, but before any Cohabitation with, *Joſeph*, a Man of the ſame Stock. Compare St. *Matth.* i. 18, &c. alſo *Matth.* i. 6---16, and Luke ii. 3, 4, 5.

27. *To a virgin eſpouſed to a man whoſe name was Joſeph, of the Houſe of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

28. Thou, to whom God hath ſhewed the peculiar Favour of making thee a Subject of Bleſſing to all Generations, above the reſt of thy Sex.

28. *And the Angel came in unto her, and ſaid, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; Bleſſed art thou among Women.*

29. Theſe Words of the Angel ſhe was in great Concern and deep Thought with her ſelf, to underſtand the true Importance of,

29. *And when ſhe ſaw him, ſhe was troubled at his ſaying, and caſt in her mind what manner of ſalutation this ſhould be.*

30. *And the Angel ſaid unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou haſt found favour with God.*

31. As was propheſied of thee long ſince by *Iſaiah*, *Chap.* vii. 14.

31. *And behold, thou ſhalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and ſhalt call his name Jeſus.*

32, 33. This Perſon, that Son of God, that great and eternal King, of whom ſo many glorious Predictions and Characters are left us by the Prophets; See 2 *Sam.* vii. 13. 1 *Chron.* xxii. 10. *Pſal.*

32. *He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the Higheſt: and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David.*

33. *And he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end.*

Pſal. lxxxix. 36, 37. cxxxii. 11, 12. *Iſai.* ix. 6, 7. *Dan.* ii. 44. vii. 13, 14. *Mich.* iv. 7.

34. *Then ſaid Mary unto the angel, How ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not a man.*

N. B. 34. This Queſtion is not to be underſtood as proceeding from Diſbelief, but only from Wonder, and a Deſire to be ſatisfied how Events ſo ſtrange ſhould be brought to paſs.

35. *And the Angel anſwered and ſaid unto her, * The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee: Therefore alſo that holy thing which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the Son of God.*

* 35. This ſhall not be an ordinary Birth. For, as the Perſon to be born is divine and eſſentially God; ſo the Operation, by which thou ſhalt conceive him, is altogether Divine and owing to the Holy Spirit.

36. *And behold, thy couſin Elizabeth ſhe hath conceived a ſon in her old age: and this is the ſixth month with her, who was called barren.*

37. *For with God nothing ſhall be impoſſible.*

36, 37. God hath already begun to work Wonders on this Occaſion, by removing a natural Obſtruction from *Elizabeth* and giving her Strength to conceive, beyond all natural Capacity and Expectation: And this (as will more eminently appear in thy Caſe) is a Work of Omnipotence, to which nothing is hard.

38. *And Mary ſaid, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

N. 38. Here ſhe expreſſes her Conſent, her Humility, her Faith, and her Rejoycing, in this gracious Purpoſe of God.

COMMENT.

WE have here an Account of the glorious Myſtery of our Lord's Incarnation, intermix'd with ſuch a Deſcription of his Bleſſed Mother's Virtues, as ſeemed to have inclined Almighty God to make choice of Her, for the happy Inſtrument of conveying this ineſtimable Mercy to Mankind. Having therefore, upon the Portion of Scripture appointed for the Epiſtle, treated of the former of theſe Points; we will endeavour to do due Honour to the Saint of this Day, by taking ſuch a View of her excellent Graces, as the Goſpel, now read, does plainly ſet before us.

I. The *Firſt* of theſe is That, contained in the Character of her State, the Purity and Chaſtity of a Virgin. A Heart free from vain Imaginations, or looſe Deſires,

ſires; and ſo unſullied with all thoſe filthy Pollutions, that defile and deform the wanton and unclean Soul. Of all Vices, to which Mankind are ſubject, there are none of greater Danger and worſe Conſequence to us, than thoſe, which the Luſts of our Fleſh tempt us to. None, to which Nature is more prone; None, by which it is more vilely debaſed, more ſhamefully expoſed, more mortally wounded. They blind the Eyes of the Mind, deſtroy Conſideration and Thought, drag down the Affections to ſhort and ſordid Pleaſures, leave no Reliſh, no Inclination, to Joys that are either Religious or Manly: But, on the contrary, they fix us in a Hatred and Neglect of God, and enſlave us to the Appetites of Brutes. No Sins are more reproachful and ignominious; No Life more perplexed with Troubles, and Cares, and Vexations; No Enjoyments ſo mean and beſtial, nor ſo full of Folly and Shame, and dreadful Allays, as thoſe of the laſcivious and impure Man. But when theſe Temptations happen to get the Dominion over Women; Beſides all other Inconveniences that attend them, there is ſomething ſo very odious, ſomething that ſeems ſuch a Violence and Affront to the Modeſty of Their Sex, that nothing can render them more deſpicable and abhorred, in the Eyes both of God and Man.

Moſt juſtly therefore does the Virtue oppoſite to this, procure a good Eſteem and great Favour: Since by It Men are Conquerors of the ſtrongeſt and ſubtleſt Enemy, and have learnt to be deaf to the buſieſt and moſt importunate Sollicitations of a *Syren*, that labours perpetually to ruin them by her Treacherous Inchantments. By It they ſecure their Native Freedom and Greatneſs of Spirit; preſerve their Faculties from thoſe thick unwholeſome Miſts, by which Senſe and Appetite ungovern'd darken their Sight; ſecure Order and Peace within, by ſubduing all rebellious Paſſions, and keeping Reaſon and Religion conſtantly ſupreme;

preme; fixing the Affections upon things moſt worthy of them; and exerciſing the Mind in the ſweet Raptures of Meditations and Prayers, the Thirſt of Spiritual and Eternal Comforts, and all the unſpeakable Delights, which reſult from Holy Converſation, Contempt of the World, and the fervent Love of God. Theſe are the Praiſes, theſe the Qualities, of a truly Virgin Life. Not that, which is ſo with regard to outward Circumſtances only; but that which is ſo in the inward Diſpoſition, in the Choice and the Purity of the Soul; in a wilful and happy Ignorance of Evil.

And with reſpect to theſe good Qualities, theſe noble and reſigned Hearts it is, that ſuch glorious things are ſpoken of Virgins in Scripture. For, as St. *Paul* ſays of the *Jew*, ſo muſt it be ſaid in this Caſe, *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumciſion, which is outward, in the Fleſh; But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and Circumciſion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whoſe Praiſe is not of Men, but of God.* Rom. ii. 28, 29. It is not the Singleneſs of Life, but all that Modeſty, and Purity, which are figured by it, and Ornaments of it, that muſt recommend Men to God. The Divine *Spirit flies from Deceit*, and *removes far from Folly*; and *will not abide when Unrighteouſneſs cometh in.* Wiſd. i. 4. 5. The unſpotted Mind makes the Body a Temple fit for the Holy Ghoſt. And, becauſe that part of *Mary* was clean and unblemiſhed, becauſe ſhe was entirely devoted to Piety, and abominated the very Thoughts of Filthineſs, therefore was ſhe *highly favoured.* It was her chaſte and Virgin Heart, that prevailed with the Son of God, when he *took upon him to deliver Man, not to abhor* or diſdain her *Virgin Womb.* And of ſuch Virgins as theſe it is, that St. *John* ſpeaks, when he ſays, they are cloathed with white Robes, and Rev. xiv. 4.

have

have the Honour, in the New *Jeruſalem*, to attend upon the Perſon of Chriſt, and *follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth.* A bright and ſhining Innocence, which with good Care may be preſerved in any Condition of Life; And ſuch, whereof even Celibacy it ſelf, and all the affected Vows of it, are but too often deſtitute.

Secondly, Another Grace very conſpicuous in this Bleſſed Virgin, is Humility. In the whole Account of this Affair, we find no Circumſtance, that ſpeaks her exalted with the Thoughts of this Revelation, to intemperate Joy, or lofty Conceits of her ſelf: No pleaſing Reflections upon her own Virtue; nor any of thoſe things, that are uſually look'd upon, as Symptoms of Pride and Arrogance. How natural, indeed, how almoſt unavoidable, may we think it in ſuch a Caſe, for a Woman to be tranſported with being thus preferred above the reſt of her Sex, and enjoying ſuch Tokens of the Divine Favour, as none ever did, none ever ſhould, beſide her ſelf; To be tempted to look down with ſome ſort of Pity and Contempt upon Mankind, in the retrieving of whom ſhe was thus made Inſtrumental, and to think ſomething extraordinary due to that Perſon, whom the King of Heaven thus delighted to honour, by joining her Subſtance and Human Nature to his own Divine Nature? But, inſtead of all this, ſhe receives the aſtoniſhing Meſſage with Modeſty, and Meekneſs, and awful Wonder: She ſeems to make no other Uſe of the Strangeneſs of the Thing, than from thence to entertain the Myſtery with a becoming Reverence, and to be more amazed at the Greatneſs of the Condeſcenſion. *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord*, and *He hath regarded the low Eſtate of his Handmaid*, and *God hath done to me great things*, and *He hath exalted them of low degree*, and *He hath filled the hungry with good things.* Theſe are the Meditations, that riſe in her Heart; Theſe the meek and modeſt Expreſſions,

Expreſſions, by which ſhe gives vent to that Joy, which the Embaſſy of an Angel, the Salutation of her Couſin *Elizabeth*, and the Exultings of a Babe yet unborn, produced in her. A Joy, than which never was any more juſtly indulged; and yet ſo indulged, as to be profuſe only in the Praiſes of God, and the Depreſſions of her Self.

Now this Deportment could not but be the Effect of an excellent Spirit, a long confirmed Habit of that Quality, of which God hath declared himſelf particularly fond. *For though the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect to the lowly*, ſays the Pſalmiſt. *With the Lowly is Wiſdom*, and *before Honour is Humility*, ſays the Wiſe Man. *I dwell in the high and holy Place, with Him alſo that is of a contrite and humble Spirit*; ſays God himſelf by *Iſaiah*. And, *God reſiſteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble*, ſays the Apoſtle. And our Bleſſed Saviour, upon ſeveral Occaſions, inculcates that Sentence, *He that exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, but be that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.* This is accordingly recommended, as a Jewel of great Price in Women; an Ornament much more beautiful in the ſight of God, than any of thoſe, by which they are ſo ſtudious to ſet their Bodies off to the Eyes of the World.

Pſal. cxxxviii. 6.
Prov. xi. 2. — xv. 33.
Iſai. lvii. 15.
James iv. 6.
Luke xiv. 11.
1 Pet. iii. 4.

And therefore the Height of that Favour mentioned here, may very reaſonably be aſcribed to the Perfection of this moſt Charming, I had almoſt ſaid this Divine Virtue. Indeed, why ſhould I not call it Divince, ſince as none is better beloved, ſo none was ever more eminently, more viſibly, practiſed by God himſelf? For, Who can ſufficiently admire that Meekneſs, and unſpeakable Condeſcenſion, by which the King of Heaven emptied himſelf of all his Glories, left his Throne on high, and took his abode in the Body of a mean Virgin;

Virgin; vouchſafed to be born in Poverty, to live in Contempt, to become the Miniſter and the Servant of many; and ſubmitted to the Death of Slaves and Malefactors? Who ſhall compare any other Accompliſhment with This, after ſuch an Example? Who ſhall wonder, that, ſince it thus behoved Chriſt to live and ſuffer, it behoved him thus to be born too? That a Parent ſhould be choſen, ſo reſembling the Virtues of her Son? And Who ſhall hereafter fear the diſparaging or degrading of himſelf by Humility, who ſees the Human Nature of Chriſt exalted to the Right Hand of God; and a meek Virgin, lifted above the Fate of common Women, and made the Mother of the Holy and Eternal Jeſus; for excelling in it?

Thirdly, St. *Luke* takes notice of one Grace more, very remarkable in the Virgin upon this Occaſion, which is her Faith. And This, in a matter ſo foreign, ſo wholly new, ſo myſterious and above the Power of all created Nature, is very extraordinary. 'Tis true ſhe queſtioned the Angel, *(Ver. 34.) How ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not a Man?* But that was in a Senſe, very different from *Zachary*'s at the 18th Verſe, *Whereby ſhall I know this?* He queſtioned the Meſſenger, becauſe he looked upon himſelf as deluded. She doubted not the Truth, nor the Authority of the Meſſage; but deſired Satisfaction, only as to the Manner of bringing about an Event, altogether unuſual, and for which ſhe ſaw no competent Means. Leſs than this could not be done to ſave her Credulity; and More than this ſhe inſiſted not upon, to indulge her Curioſity. For when it was declared, that the Operation ſhould be God's; that, however ſtrange this might appear, yet His Power knew no Bounds; and, as an Evidence that it did not, how he had already exerted it in a very wonderful Inſtance; by giving a Child to Perſons of her own Kindred, whom both Age and Nature had made barren, and cut off from all Expectations of ſuch a Bleſ-

ſing;

ſing; When once, I ſay, this had been declared, ſhe raiſes no freſh Scruples, nor urges any of thoſe Difficulties, which to Human Reaſon are inſuperable; but returns this ſubmiſſive Anſwer, at once declaring her Expectation that it would, and her Deſires that it might, be ſo; *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, Be it unto me according unto thy Word.* She left God to finiſh his own Work in his own Way; not doubting, but his Omnipotence would take Care of his Truth. She offer'd herſelf, the contented, the ready, nay the glad Object of this Miracle, for Heaven to fulfil all its good Pleaſure upon. This, without Diſpute, is the Importance of the Virgin's reply; and accordingly we find her Carriage thus interpreted by *Elizabeth*, to her mighty Commendation; *(Ver. 45.) Bleſſed is ſhe that believed, for there ſhall be a Performance of thoſe things, which were told her from the Lord.* This was a noble Reſignation; fit for Her, whoſe Son was to plant a Religion built upon Faith. And, where ſuch Virtues as theſe conſpire, where Each is ſo eminent, Each ſo acceptable, we may allow the Perſon to be *Full of Grace*; and diſcern Reaſon ſufficient, why this bright Conſtellation ſhould render her lovely in God's Eyes, and *highly favour'd by him.*

I conclude with exhorting my Readers to conſider, that, As Chriſt was born for us, ſo he muſt likewiſe be born in us, if we expect the Benefit of his moſt ſtupendous Incarnation. That is, His Likeneſs and Image muſt be formed in our Souls: We muſt expreſs his Virtues and Diſpoſition, and be one with him in Affection, if ever we be united to him in Glory. And here this Holy Mother is our Emblem and our Pattern. For the ſame Qualities, which recommended Her to that high Honour, are neceſſary to invite Him to dwell in Our Hearts. We muſt be ſure to provide him a clean Habitation, a Houſe ſwept and garniſhed; purged from the Filth and Dregs of fleſhly and impure

Deſires,

Deſires, and adorned with Graces and Good Works. Eſpecially we muſt be cloathed with Humility; ſo eminent in this Virgin, ſo delightful to God, ſo conformable to all the Practice, to all the Precepts of the meek and lowly Jeſus; without which it is utterly impoſſible, for any Man to be like unto him, or to be loved by him. And we muſt fix and confirm our Minds with a ſtedfaſt and unblameable Faith; A modeſt and reſigned Belief of all the deep and glorious Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion; A lively and active Principle, ſuch as may invigorate and quicken us, render us indefatigable and conſtant in Well-doing, fruitful and exemplary, to the Glory of God, and the Good of Others; Such, as may fire us with a commendable Emulation of the Bleſſed above, and teach us ſo to commemorate their Crowns, as to aſpire after them too, by copying their Virtues. This is to honour the Virgin indeed, when we conform ourſelves to Her in pure and virgin Hearts; This, to celebrate the Conception of Jeſus, when we conceive him afreſh by a Spiritual and Myſtical Regeneration; This, *Laſtly*, is the only Method, ſo to receive the glad Tidings of his Incarnation, and to improve by that Meſſage of the Angel, as, by qualifying ourſelf for the happy Influences of his moſt meritorious *Death and Paſſion, to partake in the Glories of his Reſurrection.* Which if we heartily endeavour, as we are taught now to pray, God will hear the Devotions of this Feſtival, and grant them for the ſake of the ſame his Son, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*



St.

St. MARK's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. MARK.

SAint *Mark* is, in the Preface to St. *Jerome*'s Comment on his Goſpel, ſaid to be by Deſcent a *Levite*. They, who make him one of the Seventy Diſciples, forget what *Euſebius* affirms out of *Papias*, that he never heard or follow'd Jeſus at all. It is much diſputed, whether he be the ſame with that *John* ſurnamed *Mark*, mentioned *Acts* xii. and xv. as the Attendant, firſt of *Paul* and *Barnabas*; afterwards, when theſe two Apoſtles parted, of the Latter, whoſe Siſter's Son he was. This is the Reaſon, by which moſt have been induced to conclude our Evangeliſt not to be the ſame; As thinking thoſe Travels, with *Paul* and *Barnabas*, inconſiſtent with that conſtant Retainure to St. *Peter*, which is generally reported of our St. *Mark*.

Lib. iii. c. 39.

Col. iv. 10.

But, what Weight ſoever this Argument may have, ſeveral Learned Perſons are by no means convinced by it. A late Learned Hiſtorian declares himſelf ſo far from ſeeing any neceſſary Conſequence in it, as to ſay, that *Mark*, the Kinſman of *Barnabas*, is without doubt the ſame with him who wrote the Goſpel, which goes under St. *Mark*'s Name; and which is generally ſuppoſed to be written, while he was under the Direction of St. *Peter*. And our learned *Pearſon* manifeſtly inclines to this Opinion. He preſumes the Reaſon of *Mark* returning with *Barnabas* and *Saul* to *Antioch* (when they had delivered the Charitable Collections, *Acts* xi, xii) was, that St. *Peter*'s

Le Sueur ad Ann. Chr. 60.

Annal. Paul. ad Ann. 44.

ter's Abſence from *Jeruſalem* at that time gave him leiſure ſo to do. He adds, that the Kindneſs and Acquaintance between *Peter* and *Barnabas*, the Uncle of *Mark*, was the moſt intimate that could be; He imputes to this the Compliance ſhew'd by *Barnabas* to St. *Peter*'s Behaviour among the Judaizers at *Antioch*; and the Diſagreement, which afterwards ſeparated St. *Paul* and Him in their Travels. The Queſtion is not of any great Conſequence: but far from being given up on the One ſide; though perhaps more generally aſſerted on that Other, which holds, that theſe are two different *Marks*.

Ad Ann. 50.

Be that as it will; The Goſpel we now enjoy under that Name, is agreed to be written by the Author, when accompanying St. *Peter*; and the Occaſion of writing it to be this. After the Defeat of *Simon Magus*, the Reputation of our Faith grew ſo great, and the Converts to it ſo many, at *Rome*; that they were deſirous to have in Writing thoſe Doctrines, which had hitherto been imparted to them by Word of Mouth only. St. *Mark*, to whom this Requeſt was made, did accordingly ſet himſelf to recollect, what he by long Converſation had learnt from St. *Peter*. This Writing from his own Memory is render'd as a Reaſon, both for the Brevity of the Narration, and the Order of Facts, being leſs exact. To the ſetting about this Work, it is ſaid, that, although *Peter* neither gave Countenance or Diſcountenance; yet, when finiſhed, he peruſed, approved, and recommended it to the Uſe of the Churches. This Account *Euſebius* gives from a Book of Inſtitutions, written by St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, but now loſt. There is indeed a Paſſage in *Irenæus*, importing, that this Goſpel was not written, till after St. *Peter*'s Death. (If by the Word

Euſeb. Hiſt. lib. ii. c. 15. — v. 8. — vi. 14.

Euſeb. lib. iii. c. 39.

Comp. Euſ. Hiſt. lib. vi. c. 14. & lib. ii. c. 15.

Iren. lib. iii. c. 1.

Word ἔξοδος or *Diſceſſus*, *Irenæus* meant *Deceaſe*; and not rather the Departure of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* from *Rome*; as ſome Interpreters underſtand him.) But the general Current of Antiquity favours the Account of *Clement*. To which we may add, that, though the moſt Ancient Writers give us now no authentick Particulars of St. *Mark*'s Death, yet thoſe who do, ſeem to place it before that of St. *Peter*.

Le Sueur. Ann. 62. *Ib. Ann.* 65. *Pearſ.* 68.

Having written his Goſpel, he is ſaid to have left *Italy*, which had enjoy'd the Benefit of his Labours for ſome time; and to have carried it with him to *Alexandria* in *Egypt*; where he firſt preached Chriſt, conſtituted a Biſhoprick, and was ſucceeded in it by *Anianus*. The *Aſcetick* Chriſtians*, ſaid to be an Order founded there by Him, ſeem to be miſtaken for Jews. For ſuch were the *Therapeutæ*; whoſe Rules and Diſcipline *Philo* ſo highly extols, that thoſe very Commendations render their Chriſtianity ſuſpected. After ſome time ſpent in *Alexandria*, St. *Mark* is ſaid to have gone through *Lybia*, *Marmorica*, and *Pentapolis*. And, after his return to *Alexandria*, to have been murther'd there, about *Eaſter*, at which time of the Year extraordinary Honours uſed to be paid to *Serapis*. The *Egyptians*, in Zeal for this Idol, ſeized St. *Mark*, as he was officiating in his Chriſtian Church; ty'd his Feet with Cords, and dragg'd him about the Streets and Rocks, till, the Skin and Fleſh being torn off, he at laſt expired under the Torture.

Nazian. in Arrian. Euſeb. ubi. ſup. Chryſ. in 12. *Ap. Hieron. in Catal.*

**Compare Val. in Euſeb.* lib. 2. c. 17. *with Dr.* Brown's Diſſertat. de Therapeutis, *at the end of* Clem. Roman. Epiſt. *publiſhed by* Colomeſius *at* Lond. 1687.

The COLLECT.

O Almighty God, who haſt inſtructed thy holy Church with the heavenly Doctrine of thy Evangeliſt St. *Mark*; Give us Grace, that, being not like Children carried away with every blaſt of vain Doctrine, we may be eſtabliſhed in the Truth of thy holy Goſpel, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

Eph. iv. 14, 15.

The EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE. Eph. iv. 7.

7. To each Christian (so many ways united to all his Fellow-Christians, as before, *Ver.* 4, 5, 6.) are imparted such Assistances, as the Wisdom of Christ, our common Head, thinks proper.

7. *UNto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

8. And this Distribution was long since foretold by *David*, who (*Psal.* lxviii.) describes the Messiah mounting his Throne in Heaven, and, (as an Evidence of the Majesty and Power, to which his Human Nature was now advanced) after an entire Conquest of the Enemies of his Kingdom, scattering his Gifts, as is usual among Men, on Days of Inauguration and Triumph.

8. *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

9. Now that Expression, of Ascending up on high, hath reference to some former Coming down. And so did this King and Conquerer descend from the utmost height, when Incarnate, and vouchsafing to live on this Earth; And yet more so, when not disdaining to die, and to be buried in it.

9. *(Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?*

10. He therefore is now return'd back to his heavenly Throne, the highest and most Glorious that can be, to exercise an universal Dominion, and to diffuse his Influences over every part of his mystical Body the Church.

10. *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

11. To which purpose it is, that he qualified Persons for, and sent them in, the several Capacities here mentioned, some to reveal, some to foretel and explain his Will; some to propagate and record it; others to govern according to it, and instruct in it, where it was already received.

11. *And he gave some, Apostles: and some, Prophets: and some, Evangelists: and some, Pastors and Teachers;*

12. Now these several Offices, and the Powers for performing them, were all designed for the Benefit of the Body in common: Every Party concerned was hereby obliged to contribute his best Endeavours for the Improvement and mutual Support of Believers, for the faithful Discharge of his own proper Post, and for the Peace and Unity of this Body;

12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

13. Again, The End of such Improvement is, that by the unanimous Confession of, and strict Adherence to, the same Principles of our Religion; and by a competent Knowledge of Christ and his Gospel; we all should rise to, and meet together in, such Degrees of Piety and Perfection; as are esteem'd the Maturity and full Growth of Christians,

13. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

ſtians, according to thoſe Meaſures of each, whereof our Nature and State are capable.

14. *That we henceforth be no more children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:*

14. By theſe means we ſhall attain to ſuch Steadineſs and ſound Judgment, as may ſet us above that Childiſh Ignorance and Levity, which floats between different Opinions, and is carried into this or that, with every Sophiſtical Turn of an Argument managed by crafty Seducers, who uſe their utmoſt Induſtry to corrupt the Chriſtian Doctrine.

15. *But ſpeaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Chriſt:*

15. Such Unity in Opinion and Affection among the Members, will unite and endear us more and more to Chriſt our Myſtical Head;

16. *From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of itſelf in love.*

16. From whoſe Influences, derived through the whole Spiritual, each Member of this (like the Natural) Body, according to the Powers it receives, and the Poſition in which it ſtands, contributes to the Strength and Beauty of the whole; by diſcharging its own Function faithfully, and promoting that, which is the proper Health and Growth of this Body, Unity of Faith, and active Charity, diffuſed through all the Parts of it.

COMMENT.

THE Verſes next before, had given a Deſcription of that Myſtical Union in the Chriſtian Church, which St. *Paul* here makes uſe of, as an Argument for enforcing that *Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, which he, at the *Third* Verſe, exhorts his *Epheſians* by all poſſible Means to *keep*. The particular Bands or Ligaments, by which Chriſtians are thus knit together, are there inſtanced in; and urged, as ſo many indiſpenſable Obligations to a godly Agreement in Opinion and Affection. The Nature of this Union, repreſented in Scripture under ſeveral Similitudes, hath been illuſtrated, with regard to Each that came before us, in ſome preceding Diſcourſes.

Ver. 4, 5, 6.

See Ep. 1. *S. aft.* Epiph. *and Ep. for St.* Thomas's *Day.*

The Paſſage, we are now concern'd in, proceeds to ſhew, what Means and Aſſiſtances our Bleſſed Lord hath left us, for the Eſtabliſhment and Preſervation of this Union; What Ends he had in ordaining: And What we ſhould conſtantly propoſe to ourſelves in uſing thoſe Means and Aſſiſtances. Theſe two Points therefore ſhall make the Heads of what I intend to lay down on the preſent Occaſion. For indeed they are the whole Subſtance of the Epiſtle for the Day. The Former being inſiſted on, from the *Seventh* to the *Twelfth*; The Latter, from the *Twelfth* Verſe to the end of this Portion of Scripture.

The Apoſtle's Argument here is much the ſame with That, more largely expatiated upon, in the *Twelfth* of the *Firſt* Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. The Gifts, in both Places, are chiefly thoſe Supernatural Ones, which the extraordinary Occaſions of a Religion, to be proved and planted by Miracles, did require at its firſt ſetting out into the World.

Theſe Gifts having been thought, by Some, to have accompanied the ſanctifying Graces of Baptiſm, in the firſt Beginnings of Chriſtianity; and, for ſome time, to be imparted to the Generality of private Believers; as a Mark of God's Favour, a viſible Pledge of his Acceptance of their own Converſion, and a powerful Motive to that of Other People. But They, who do not allow thoſe Diſtributions to have been ſo extenſive, ſeem not at all to doubt, but that every one called, in thoſe early Days, to the publick Miniſtry, did, in ſome kind and meaſure or other, partake of them. Now, according to the different Quality of ſuch Gifts, and the different Stations and Offices, in which they were exerciſed; the Perſons ſo endued were diſtinguiſhed under different Titles and Characters. An Example hereof we have in the *Eleventh* Verſe of this Chapter, and at the latter End of That *Twelfth* Chapter

See Chryſ. *on* 1 Cor. xii.

ter to the *Corinthians*; Where, as I have already obſerved, St. *Paul* enlarges upon the ſame Subject.

At this ſo great a Diſtance of Time, and in Circumſtances of the Preſent, ſo very unlike to thoſe of the Primitive Church; it is perhaps not poſſible, to be ſure not neceſſary, nicely to determine the Bounds of thoſe ſeveral Offices, and the preciſe Importance of the Names, by which They, who then bore them, are ſtyled. But withal, it is eaſy to diſcern, that Some among them are of ſuch a Nature, as renders them of perpetual Uſe and Neceſſity. Thoſe, I mean, whoſe Buſineſs chiefly conſiſts, in Authority to govern, and Commiſſion to inſtruct. Accordingly, when all miraculous Operations, and all Occaſion for the Workers of them ceaſed; Care was taken to preſerve and continue a conſtant Succeſſion of the Reſt. For, though there be now no longer, nor have been for many Ages, Healers, nor Speakers with Tongues, nor Interpreters, nor Diſcerners of Spirits, nor Prophets, as heretofore there were; Yet are there ſtill, (and it is fit there ſhould be to the World's End) Men, who, for the Spiritual Power and Rule they ſucceed into, may not improperly be term'd *Apoſtles*; and Others, who, for their Labours in the Work of Exhortation and Doctrine, and Watching over, and Feeding the Flock under their reſpective Charge, are, in the very ſtricteſt Senſe of the Words, *Paſtors* and *Teachers*, in the Church of Chriſt.

From this Account of the Means and Aſſiſtances, afforded to the Primitive Chriſtians, and of Thoſe continued to all Ages of Chriſtianity, it ſeems a thing very natural and fitting, to make theſe following Remarks.

1. Though the End, to be promoted by ſuch Means, be, as we ſhall ſhortly ſee it is, One and Immutable; yet the Methods made uſe of to ſerve and compaſs that End, have been Many. Not the ſame in ſucceed-

ing, as in the more early Ages of our Religion: But varied, according to different Times and Circumſtances; and diſpenſed in ſuch Kinds and Meaſures, as the Wiſdom of God ſaw proper to Each of them.

2. Such Diverſity of Means and Diſpenſations notwithſtanding, we have no manner of reaſon to queſtion a conſtant Supply of Them that are ſufficient. And conſequently, if the Diſtributions in Our time be more ſparing, than thoſe we read and hear of formerly; This comes to paſs, not becauſe God is leſs intent upon the great Purpoſes to be furthered by them, or partially fond of One Generation above another; but becauſe the Neceſſities of his Church required a more liberal Hand at one time, and the more ſettled Condition of it at another time, might be very well provided for, by a leſs expenſive Supply.

3. Be the Means and Aſſiſtances afforded more or leſs, Our Duty, with regard to them, continues ſtill the ſame. Which is, at all times to make the beſt of the Helps and Opportunities we have: And to take due Care, that what is ſufficient in its own Nature, (and would be ſo, with juſt Improvement, as to our own Particular) do not prove ineffectual to the great Ends here mentioned, through any Neglect or Fault of Ours. Now this Care is then duly taken, By Perſons in publick Character, when they exerciſe their reſpective Functions and Truſts diligently and conſcientiouſly: And, like faithful Stewards, render their high Stations and larger Talents, as ſerviceable to the Cauſe of God and Religion, as poſſibly they can. And it is taken by thoſe in a private Capacity, Then, and only then, when they ſubmit to their Spiritual Governors, in all Lawful Ordinances; When they adhere ſtedfaſtly to the *Paſtors* and *Teachers*, regularly called, and ſet over them; When they employ their utmoſt Endeavours, to profit by their Holy Labours, count them *worthy of all Honour*, and (abſtracting from

from other Conſiderations) *eſteem them very highly*, (as this Apoſtle elſewhere enjoins) even for their Character, and *for their Works ſake.* 1 Theſſ. v. 13.

4. Since it hath pleaſed God, that the extraordinary Means and Aſſiſtances, once vouchſafed to his Church, ſhould be long ago withdrawn; and, that ſome Others here ſpecified ſhould ſtill remain: This ſeems very evidently to warrant our inferring, that it is our Lord's Will, Theſe Latter ſhould always continue; and that their Continuance is neceſſary to the very Being and Conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church. For, What Account can any reaſonable Man render to himſelf, of ſuch a Difference put between theſe Two ſorts of Gifts: but, that the Neceſſity of the Former was temporary and occaſional only; whereas that of the Latter is perpetual and indiſpenſable?

It may be, and indeed it hath been, very often, and very maliciouſly objected, (though never I think ſo often, or ſo maliciouſly objected, as in the profligate Age, wherein We live) that ſuch Orders and Offices are now ſuperfluous, when the Secular Powers are Chriſtian, and the Book of Life in every Hand: So that the Civil Magiſtrate ſuffices to *govern* us, and All of common Induſtry and Underſtanding are abundantly qualified to *teach* themſelves.

But to this the Anſwer is plain and eaſy, and, to Men of Probity and fair Argument, would not fail to be ſatisfactory too, *viz. That* the Societies, in which theſe Governments are exerciſed, are different. The Civil is a particular State or Country; The Spiritual, a Church diffuſed, whereſoever Chriſtians happen to be, throughout the whole World. *That* the Powers they claim and exerciſe are alſo different. Different in their Original; for the Civil was given by God to Men, and is regulated by the Municipal Laws and Cuſtoms of each Nation; Whereas the Spiritual was given by God

Eph. i. 22. God to Chriſt; (whom he thus made *Head over all things to the Church*) Confered by Chriſt on his Apoſtles; derived down by Them to their Succeſſors, and, in all its eſſential Parts, the ſame, all the Chriſtian World over. They are alſo different in their Objects; The One extending to the Lives, Liberties and ſecular Intereſts, The Other, to the Minds and Conſciences, of its Subjects. They are *Laſtly* different in their Ends too; The one aiming at the Safety and Welfare of their Bodies and Eſtates, in this preſent World; The Other, at the Salvation of their Souls, in that which is to come.

The plain Conſequences of all which Remarks I take to be, *That* Neither of theſe Powers can be qualified to diſcharge the Buſineſs of the Other: *That* they are ſo perfectly diſtinct, as to have nothing of Danger to apprehend from each Other: *That* they are ſo contrived, as never, in their own Nature, mutually to interfere in their Exerciſe, except when One of theſe Powers is abuſed and ſtretch'd beyond its due and proper Limits: And, *Laſtly*, *That* this Spiritual Government, being inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf, cannot be abrogated, ought not to be changed, by any Authority leſs Sacred, any Declaration leſs poſitive and expreſs, than That, by which it was firſt eſtabliſhed. This (we have reaſon to believe) would not be wanting, were ſuch Authority, in His Judgment, miſchievous or unneceſſary: But for any Man to pronounce it ſo, without any ſuch Signification from its Author, is certainly moſt impudent Sacrilege, and even raging Impiety.

This for the *Governing*; Then for the *Teaching* part; Do not the many Millions of ignorant Souls, notwithſtanding the moſt free Acceſs to the Holy Scriptures, furniſh us with too melancholy a Proof of the Neceſſity of it? If common Underſtanding and Induſtry

duſtry would give Men a competent Knowledge of their Duty; yet is it true, that All have that Degree of Underſtanding? Or, that all who have, cultivate it with that Induſtry they may and ought to do? Admit they did. Yet, Is there no Occaſion for, no Advantage to be had by even Them that know their Duty beſt, from an Order of Men, who are bound to deal impartially with them, in awakening their Attention, ſearching their Conſciences, repreſenting their Dangers, quickening their Endeavours, and frequently refreſhing their Memories in many things; which they are ſo far from carefully recollecting, that the Temptations, and Pleaſures, and Cares of the World often prevail with them to uſe many Arts, and take great Pains, to forget, and even drive theſe things out of their Thoughts?

But, waving all theſe Arguments; Are we to ſuppoſe, that the Whole of a Paſtor and Teacher's Office conſiſts in that ſingle Point of Inſtruction? No ſuch Matter. Theſe are the Perſons authorized by God, to tranſact the Affairs of the ſecond Covenant, between Him and his People, called for that reaſon in Scripture his Delegates, or *Ambaſſadors:* To ſeal that Covenant by viſible Signs and Sacraments, and therefore ſaid to *baptize Men* for their *waſhing away of their Sins*; To offer the commemorative Sacrifice of their Lord's Death, and therefore ſaid to *bleſs* the Holy Elements at his Table: Theſe are appointed to declare the guilty Conſcience abſolved or condemned; and, in the Name and by the declared Power of their great Original, the great High Prieſt of our Profeſſion, to grant Pardon upon certain Conditions: And therefore they are ſaid to *rebuke with all Authority*, to *retain* and *remit the Sins* of others. Theſe are ſet between God and Men, to bleſs in his Name, to intercede for their Charge, with an expreſs Promiſe of being heard

2 Cor. v. 20.

Acts xxii. 16.

1 Cor. x. 16.

Tit. ii. 15.
John xx. 23.

Jam. v. 14, 15.

heard in those solemn Mediations. In a Word, These are declared to be *ordained for Men in things pertaining unto God*; and, in that respect, to have an *Honour* conferred upon them, *which no Man taketh to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* By which is meant, that whoever usurps this Office, is an Intruder; and that None, who are not so called, can perform any parts of it, with the same Efficacy and Jurisdiction.

Heb. v. 1.

Ver. 4.

So far is this Distinction from being an empty Title; So impossible to be at any time superfluous; and by Consequence, so justly to be concluded of perpetual Duration, and even Essential to the Constitution of the Christian Church. What less indeed can we conclude, from the Apostle's own Words now before us, than that, so long as there is a *Body of Christ to be edified*, and *Saints to be perfected*, there will always be Occasion for the *Work of the Ministry*, and for these Orders of Men separated by God to the Discharge of it? For thus the Substance of my *First* Head is here connected with my *Second:* The Means for, with the End of, establishing the Mystical Union of Christians. *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers; For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*, &c.

Ver. 11, 12.

I have been the longer upon this Head, with a Design to shew, how little ground there is, for the Cavils, Either of Libertines who deny, Or of Enthusiasts who despise, the Institution of these Orders in the Christian Church. And I hope what hath been said may suffice, As well to vindicate the Persons exercising the Authority proper to these Characters, from the Tyranny and Usurpation charged upon them by the Former sort; as to invalidate the Pretences of the latter, who vainly fancy themselves above any establish'd Dispensations.

The

The indiſputable Dominion of the Fountain of theſe Powers ought to ſilence all invidious Reflections upon Them, to whom they have been regularly convey'd; And His Infinite Wiſdom muſt convince all reaſonable Men, that the Ends, which he appointed theſe as Means to bring about, they are certainly ſufficient for. What thoſe Ends are, it is the Deſign of my *Second* General Head, and I now proceed, to examine.

II. Now thoſe, which are more ſuccinctly contained in the *Twelfth*, are explained more at large in the *four* following Verſes. And They may be reduced to *Two*; Unity of Faith, and Univerſal Charity. Both which I ſhall treat of in ſuch a manner, as may be moſt agreeable to the Scripture now under Conſideration. That of Faith is thus expreſs'd, *Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt. That we henceforth be no more Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the ſlight of Men, and cunning Craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But ſpeaking the Truth in Love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Chriſt.* Ver. 13, 14, 15.

1. In order to underſtand the Apoſtle's Meaning aright, with regard to the Former of theſe, which is Unity of Faith; We ſhall do well to take our firſt ſtep, by examining, what may moſt probably be intended in thoſe Words, which ſeem more immediately to expreſs the End to be attained from it, *viz. Coming to a perfect Man unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.*

Now Perfection may be capable of ſeveral Senſes, according to the different Subjects to which it is apply'd. In its higheſt and moſt abſolute Senſe, it ſignifies a State ſo elevated and complete, that, as all Defect, ſo all Addition, is excluded from it: And the Being

Being thus perfect, not only actually is not, but cannot poſſibly be at any time, more or leſs, better or worſe, than it is. Thus we affirm moſt truly of God, that he is perfect in Holineſs, in Juſtice, in Wiſdom, in Power, and the like. That is, There is no Degree of Theſe, or any Other Excellencies, attributed to the Divine Nature, of which he is not in full Poſſeſſion. And what he ſtands thus poſſeſſed of can no more admit of Diminution, than of Increaſe. But then it is very plain, that this abſolute Perfection can truly be affirmed of God alone; becauſe the very Notion of it includes Infinity and Immutability. For whatſoever is not Infinite, may be greater and better; and whatſoever is not Unchangeable, may be leſs and worſe. Since therefore None but God is Infinite and Unchangeable; it follows, that none but God is, or can be, abſolutely, and in the higheſt Senſe of the Word, Perfect.

When therefore Perfection is attributed to any Creature, we muſt underſtand it in a qualified Senſe; and ſuch, as is limited by the Capacities of that Creature in particular, at the Time, and in the Circumſtances, the Perſon or Thing is, when thus ſpoken of. Thus the Perfection of a Man conſiſts in all thoſe Attainments, of which a Creature compounded of Soul and Body (conſidered as ſuch) is capable. But this is a Perfection, belonging to none; except to the firſt *Adam* before his Fall; and to that Second *Adam*, the *Lord from Heaven*, who for our ſakes vouchſafed to take the Human Nature upon him. If then the Word be uſed of any Other; it can denote that Perfection only, which fallen Man, under all the Diſadvantages of Original Corruption, but aſſiſted by Divine Grace, can, as Matters now ſtand with the Race of a lapſed Anceſtor, come up to. And This does not only fall infinitely below the complete Perfection peculiar to God; but it ſtops vaſtly ſhort even of that qualified Perfection, which the Human Nature in our firſt Parents was

(before

(before their Tranſgreſſion, and the fatal Conſequences thereupon) form'd in, and fitted for.

But our Gracious God, by the Second Covenant, hath given us Expectations of a future and better State, in which the Infirmities of our preſent one ſhall be removed. And hence ariſes another Diſtinction, termed in the Schools, The Perfection of the *Way*, and the Perfection of our *Country*, or Journey's End. The Former is ſuch, as is allow'd to a Condition of Diſcipline and Tryal; The Latter is reſerved for that of our Happineſs and Reward. And This is evidently St. *Paul*'s Meaning; Where, ſpeaking of Knowledge particularly, he ſays, *We know in part, and we prophecy in part; But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away.* As it ſeems to be alſo in that other Place, where, after mention of attaining *to the Reſurrection of the Dead*; he adds immediately; *Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after*, &c. *and preſs towards the Mark*, &c.

1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

Phil. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

This laſt Diſtinction deſerves the greater notice, becauſe it opens the way to Another, exceeding uſeful (indeed abſolutely needful) for underſtanding ſeveral Paſſages in the New Teſtament. It is, *That* ſuch degrees of many Virtues are ſtyled Perfect, as, although they are not the utmoſt poſſible to be attained in our Preſent State; are yet, according to the Terms of the Goſpel-Covenant, ſufficient to qualify us for the Perfection of our future and better State.

'Tis thus, that we read of Perfection in *Knowledge*, in *Faith*, in *Patience*, in *Love*, and the like. All which do not, (as is plain from thoſe laſt Words of the Apoſtle to the *Philippians*, joined with what follows at the 15th Verſe there, *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded*, &c.) All which, I ſay, do not ſhut

1 Cor. ii. 6. Jam. ii. 22. 1 John iv. 18.

Phil. iii. 11, &c.

ſhut out all Poſſibility of farther Improvements; but only imply ſuch to have been already made, as the Duty of Chriſtians does, in each of thoſe reſpects, require. An Inſtance or Two will ſuffice to ſet this Matter in a clearer Light.

When the Rich Young Man had expreſs'd his Deſire of knowing what he muſt *do to inherit eternal Life*; and had recited the Commandments of the Second Table, as things obſerved by him *from his Youth up*; he aſks, *What lack I yet?* To this our Lord replies, *If thou wilt be perfect, go, ſell that thou haſt, and give to the Poor*, &c. That is, If thou wouldeſt be fully inſtructed in the Knowledge, and conform to the Practice, of the Chriſtian Law in its juſt Extent; Thou muſt be ready to forſake all the Advantages of this World, when Obedience to any Command of Chriſt ſhall render it neceſſary. An Obligation, which he was not before ſenſible, that the Love of God and his Neighbour had laid upon him.

Matth. xix. 16 *to* 21.

In the beginning of his *Firſt* Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, St. *Paul* had taken notice of the common Prejudices againſt the Goſpel, and particularly againſt His manner of Preaching it. This, he tells them, was recommended to the World by Miracles; not *by Excellency of Speech*, or the *enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom*. But, how much ſoever the want of theſe might be deſpiſed, among Perſons ignorant of the Reaſons for ſo unuſual a Method; yet, *We*, ſays he, *ſpeak Wiſdom among them that are perfect*. That is, They, who have a true Knowledge of the Nature of this Doctrine, are fully ſatisfied in, and have the higheſt Value for, both the Matter delivered, as moſt excellent in itſelf; and the Manner of delivering it, as moſt ſuitable to the Subject, and moſt wiſely contrived for the effectual Conviction of Unbelievers.

1 Cor. ii. 1—6.

Again,

Again, The *Gnoſtics*, among other Corruptions, had taught Men to tamper with their Conſciences; affirming it lawful to ſave one's ſelf, by denying Chriſt in times of Perſecution. Now St. *John*, to ſhew the baſeneſs of this Principle, ſays, *There is no fear in love, but perfect love caſteth out fear; he that feareth, is not made perfect in love.* That is, The Love of God and Chriſt, required of every Chriſtian, implies ſuch Ardency and Conſtancy; as ſhall make and keep Men in a continual Diſpoſition, reſolutely, and even chearfully, to undergo any Hardſhips and Sufferings that can poſſibly befal them, for the ſake, and on account, of the Profeſſion of the Faith. And no temper of Mind, ſhort of this Courage, can anſwer the Duty and Character of thoſe, who call themſelves Diſciples to a perſecuted and crucified Maſter. 1 John iv. 17, 18.

But what need we ſeek any farther, than to the Scripture now in Hand, for an Illuſtration of this Point? The very Nature of the Metaphors uſed here, does in truth ſeem to me, to import, above any other Scripture whatſoever, that Evangelical Perfection muſt not always be rigorouſly underſtood, for the largeſt Meaſures that any Chriſtian may, but for ſo much as every Chriſtian muſt, arrive at, to juſtify his Hopes, and to anſwer his Character.

This, I apprehend, is ſufficiently intimated by St. *Paul*, when comparing the Growth and Proportions of the Spiritual, to thoſe of the Natural Man. For, it is no way neceſſary to the Perfection of the Latter, to have attained the largeſt Meaſures of Stature or Strength, that can be, or that ever have been, or that ſhall be actually attained. But He is eſteemed a Perfect Man, who hath all the parts of Body and Mind in their juſt Maturity. So neither is it required, to denominate the Spiritual Man perfect, that he have a clear and full Comprehenſion of the Myſteries of the

Chriſtian Religion; Or, that he underſtand as much of them, as ever Any did, or ſhall; but it ſuffices, that he be rightly inſtructed in, and thoroughly perſuaded of, thoſe Truths revealed in the Goſpel, which are the eſſential and diſtinguiſhing Doctrines of this Religion. And, as the Natural Man, when come to Maturity, may yet, by Exerciſe, and Study, and other proper Methods, confirm and add to the Strength and Vigour both of his Mind and Body: So may He, who in this Senſe is ſpiritually *perfect*, make daily Increaſe of his Faith and Knowledge, by converſing much with the Scriptures, by holy Contemplations, Acts of Piety and Virtue, and all thoſe excellent Arts, whereby They, who make it their Aim and Buſineſs to excel in Goodneſs, do improve and brighten the Graces of God in their Souls. In ſhort, This is a Perfection, which ſuppoſes a Meaſure, ſhort of which we cannot be Men in Chriſt; but not a Meaſure, at which they who are once arrived, either ought not to aſpire, or cannot riſe, above it.

That This is a manner of Expreſſion familiar to St. *Paul*, my Reader will be abundantly ſatisfied; if, to the Marginal Texts already referred to, he add the Conſideration of *Coloſſ.* i. 28. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 20. but eſpecially the latter end of the *Fifth*, and beginning of the *Sixth* Chapter to the *Hebrews*, compared with the Three firſt Verſes of 1 *Cor.* iii. The Laſt of which plainly implies, that this Diſtinction is not peculiar to ſuch Virtues, as are Intellectual only; but belongs to thoſe Moral and Practical ones alſo, which are oppoſite to Envyings, and Strifes, and Diviſions, on account whereof the *Corinthians* are there upbraided as *Carnal*, and *Babes in Chriſt*.

From this account of Perfection in private Chriſtians, it will be no difficult Matter to form a Judgment of that Unity in Faith and Knowledge, required by the Apoſtle. And I think we may ſafely conclude from hence,

1.

1. That it is not meant of an Agreement in or unanimous Profeſſion of all Truths, no not all Religious Truths whatſoever. Conſidering the Nature and the Corruption, the Ignorance and Frailty, the Avocations, the Inadvertencies, the Miſtakes and different Capacities and Intereſts of Men; we have reaſon to think this ſo far from neceſſary, that it is not (ordinarily ſpeaking) to be conceived poſſible. Since therefore of Points relating to Religion, all are not of equal Importance and Concern; it ſuffices, that Thoſe, which are fundamental and eſſential, ſuch as Chriſtians are ſaid by St. *Paul* to *be delivered to*, ſuch as he calls *the form of ſound Words* which muſt be *held faſt*, and wherein the Subſtance of the Covenant made in Baptiſm does properly conſiſt, be competently underſtood, firmly believed, and ſtedfaſtly continued in, by every Chriſtian.

Rom. vi. 17.
2 Tim. i. 13.

2. To ſhew how practical This is, I obſerve again, that even of theſe Fundamental Doctrines ſo perfect and maſterly a Knowledge is not expected, that every Man ſhould be able to anſwer, or ſo much as to know, every Cavil that may be ſtarted againſt them. The Apoſtle expreſſes himſelf in Terms, that imply much leſs. He is content with ſuch a Faith, as may ſet them above the Levity of Children, and ſecure them againſt the fraudulent Arts of Deceivers. And theſe Arts are ſucceſsful, only when they meet with weak and unſettled Minds. Now ſuch Steadineſs and Agreement will need good Inſtruction in the Articles, and in the Grounds, of our Belief. All which lies in a little compaſs, and may be reduced to a few plain Scriptures. Theſe will render Men proof againſt thoſe Subtleties, which they are not dextrous enough to unravel. For, as the Knowledge of a ſtreight Line diſcovers all that differ from it to be crooked, even to Them, by whom the numberleſs Forms of thoſe that do ſo differ, cannot be accounted for

particularly; So, to detect an Impoſture in this Caſe, it will ſuffice to know the plain and fundamental Truths of Chriſtianity; And, without entangling one's ſelf in nice Diſputes, reſolutely to reject all that differs from, and is inconſiſtent with Theſe.

3. I obſerve once more, that this Unity of Faith is not only capable, but neceſſary, to be attained, even in thoſe Points of Doctrine, of which we cannot have a full and adequate Comprehenſion. Accordingly St. *Ambroſe* on the place, interprets *the Knowledge of the Son of God*, and *the Fulneſs of Chriſt*, of confeſſing the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour. And this may be very Rationally, and ought to be Unanimouſly confeſſed. Becauſe, though we cannot underſtand how the Divine and Human Nature were united in His Perſon; yet we may, (and, if we will conſider things impartially, we cannot but) ſee ſuch forcible Reaſons for aſſenting to it, as muſt needs render our Unbelief highly blameable. Such are, That we ought to believe whatſoever Eternal and Eſſential Truth hath declared; That the Spirit of God, who is Truth, dictated the Holy Scriptures; That he appears to have done this, by all the Arguments and Evidences, proper to prove a Subject of that Nature; That it is moſt reaſonable to take the Doctrinal Parts of Scripture in their moſt obvious and literal Meaning; That thus to expound the Paſſages, containing the Myſteries of our Religion, is moſt agreeable to the Propriety of thoſe Languages, in which they were written. And They, who are competent Judges of theſe Matters, may ſoon be ſatisfied, that the Difficulties charged upon thoſe Scriptures, are not owing to any Obſcurity in the Texts themſelves, or to the different Acceptations of the Antients, who acknowledged theſe Doctrines; but to the more modern Perverſions, and wretched Criticiſms, of Thoſe, who have taken Pains to darken and confound them.

So

So much for the Firſt Branch of Unity, That of Faith. Let us now proceed to the Other, That of Charity, which we find deſcribed in the 16th Verſe.

That part of it which relates to Chriſt, and the conſtant Communications of Grace from Him our common Head, to every Member of his Myſtical Body, hath been largely explained heretofore. At preſent I ſhall treat of the Other part only, which concerns our own Duty. And, to the Obſervations formerly made upon This alſo, I will add but juſt ſo much, as may be ſerviceable to the Illuſtration of the Metaphor choſen to expreſs it, by the *edifying of the Body of Chriſt*, and *making Increaſe of the Body, unto the edifying of itſelf.*

Ep. i. *S. aft.* Epiph.

Ep. ii. *and* iii. *S. aft.* Epiph.

And here is the proper place for making good a former Promiſe, of ſtating the true and Scriptural Notion of Edification. Which ſhall be done with all the Plainneſs and Brevity that I can.

Ep. for St. Thomas's *Day.*

But before I come to That, it may not be amiſs to take ſome notice of Another great End; wherein not the Miniſtry only, but They alſo who live under it, may and ought to be inſtrumental; expreſſed in the 12th Verſe, by the *Perfecting of the Saints.* The Word itſelf tranſlated by *Perfecting* is no where elſe to be found in the New Teſtament. But, according to the Force of its Root, which often occurs there, and muſt direct us in this Enquiry, we have reaſon to think, that it is very capable of the following Senſes.

Καταρτισμὸς. Καταρτίζω.

1. It may ſignify Finiſhing, by a Supply of that which was lacking to render it compleat; Thus the Apoſtle prays for the *Corinthians Perfection*, exhorts them to *be perfected*, and deſires to ſee the *Theſſalonians*, that he might *perfect that which was lacking in*

2 Cor. xiii. 9, 11. 1 Theſſ. iii. 10.

their Faith; all which he expreſſes by the Word, whence this is derived.

2. It may alſo ſignify mending any Breach, or reducing any thing out of Place. And thus the Verb is uſed by Two Evangeliſts, where the Fiſhermen are ſaid to be *mending* their Nets, and again by St. *Paul*, with Alluſion to a Bone broken or out of Joint: Where he exhorts the *Galatians*, if any *be overtaken in a Fault, that they which are Spiritual ſhould* reſtore *ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs.*

Matth. iv. 21. Mark i. 19.

Gal. vi. 1.

3. Again, It is frequently taken for compacting the ſeveral parts of any Whole, ſo as that there ſhall from thence reſult one entire and regular Frame. Thus we find it uſed of God's *making* the World, Of the Body *prepared* for Chriſt, and fitted for a Sacrifice; Of the Man of God *framed*, or as we read, *throughly furniſhed* to all good Works, And of the *Veſſels of Wrath* fitted (or as our Margin, *made up*) for Deſtruction.

Heb. xi. 3. — x. 5. 2 Tim. iii. 17. Rom. ix. 22.

The Deſign of St. *Paul* here is well anſwered by any, or all, of theſe Significations. For the Saints are then *perfected* in the *firſt* of them; when the ſeveral Orders (ſaid at the 11th Verſe to be given for that purpoſe) do, by the regular and diligent Adminiſtration of the Word and Sacraments, ſupply what is lacking, and finiſh every Member of this Society, in the Knowledge and Practice of Religion. They are *perfected* in the *Second* Senſe; when theſe Miniſters reclaim the Exorbitances of the Diſorderly and Wicked, and, by judicious Rebukes, affectionate Warnings, and due Application of the Cenſures and Comforts entruſted in their Hands, reſtore Penitents; and ſo retrieve the Beauty and Strength of this Body by healing the Breaches made in it. They are *perfected* in the *laſt* Senſe, when thoſe Rulers and Teachers keep every Member to its proper Station; and

and by Example, Inſtruction, Diſcipline, and every poſſible Method, propagate and preſerve Unity and Order: So rendering the ſeveral Members, like one Body, animated by the ſame Soul. In which Senſe alſo this Apoſtle himſelf uſes the Word, when *beſeeching* the *Corinthians by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, that they would all *ſpeak the ſame thing*, that there might be *no Diviſions among them*, *but* that they would be *perfectly joined together*, (the very Original Word we are ſpeaking of) *in the ſame Mind, and in the ſame Judgment.* 1 Cor. i. 10.

Next, As to *Edifying*. The proper Signification of it is Building. And thus we find it very frequently in the New Teſtament: Sometimes applied to Houſes, which indeed is its ſtricteſt and moſt literal Senſe; And ſometimes to Structures of other kinds. Examples the Reader may find, if he pleaſe to conſult the Texts noted in the Margin. In all which the ſame Greek Word elſewhere rendered *Edifying*, is read in its moſt natural Conſtruction, *Building*.

Matth. vii. 24.
— xxi. 33, 42.
— xxiv. 1.
Mark xiii. 1, 2.
Luke xii. 18.
— xiv. 28, 30.
— xvii. 28.
Acts iv. 11.

From hence it comes to be applied Metaphorically to the Church of Chriſt, and to thoſe Chriſtians who compoſe it. The Significance of which Application deſerves our particular Regard; as well for the Frequency of its Uſe, as for the great Authorities, that have warranted it to us.

When our Lord himſelf promiſed to conſtitute and perpetuate a Body of Men, that ſhould always be diſtinguiſhed by the Confeſſion of a true Faith in Him; he calls it *Building his Church upon a Rock*. Matth. xvi. 18.

Of the ſame Body collective St. *Paul* ſays, That they are *rooted and built up in Chriſt*; That *they are built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner-Stone*; Coloſſ. ii. 7. Eph. ii. 20.

That *they are a Building fitly framed together*, growing unto an holy Temple *in the Lord*; And, that *In him they are builded together, for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.* And St. *Peter* yet more particularly (after having termed Chriſt, with Alluſion to the Prophecies of *David* and *Iſaiah*, a *living Stone, diſallowed indeed of Men*, but *choſen of God, and precious*) ſays, They who *come to Him*, (that is, His Proſelytes and Diſciples) *are as ſo many lively Stones, built up a Spiritual Houſe.*

Ver. 21. *Ver.* 22. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

Now, if every Chriſtian, conſidered ſingly, be compared to a *Stone*; and if all Chriſtians, collectively taken, be a *Houſe*; The Firſt thing to be obſerved, is that mutual Joyning, which thus frames them together. And here the Analogy holds between Material Buildings and this Spiritual One. For a heap of Stones are the ſame, in Subſtance, though not in Form, before, and after, they are modelled by the Workman's Skill. That which denominates them afterwards a Houſe, is *Firſt*, the being raiſed upon, and regulated by, one common Foundation; And *Secondly*, the being orderly placed, and compacted to each other, by ſome common Cement, or Band of Union. The Foundation of this Spiritual Houſe is *Faith*. Accordingly St. *Paul* ſpeaks of *godly Edifying in Faith*; and to being *rooted and built up in Chriſt*, adds, being *ſtabliſhed in the Faith, as they had been taught.* And St. *Jude* exhorts the Brethren *to build up themſelves on their moſt holy Faith.* Upon This, as the Ground-work of all the reſt, the Firmneſs and Uniformity of the whole Structure does chiefly and eſſentially depend. Concerning which, and the Importance of it, my Reader will be better ſatisfied, with a Reference to what was ſaid on another Occaſion,

1 Tim. i. 4. Coloſſ. ii. 7. Jude 20.

Ep. for St. Thomas's Day.

Occaſion, than with an unneceſſary Enlargement or Repetition here.

That Other part, now to be treated of, which anſwers to the common Cement of a Building, is *Love*, or Charity. A Term, ſometimes of Latitude ſo great, as extends to the whole Practical Duty of a Chriſtian; but more particularly meant of Amity and Order, mutual good Underſtanding, and kind Inclinations and Offices from one to another. This therefore, at the *Fourth* Verſe, is called *the Bond of Peace*; As the Agreement in Principles is called *the Unity of the Spirit*. And Each is then kept, when, as Stones in a Structure produce Beauty and Strength, while the Lower ſupport thoſe above, the Upper couch cloſe upon thoſe below, and thoſe, in the ſame Courſe, are laid firm and true; every one fitting its own Place, and knitting with thoſe about it: So each private Chriſtian, whether Superor, Equal, or Inferior, performs the Duties of his own Station, and ſo aſſiſts Others in Their part of the Burden, as to add to the Symmetry and Firmneſs of the Building. In ſhort, when Each ſeeks his Own, in the General Good; and, all ſeparate Intereſts apart, conſiders himſelf, as a piece of the Common Frame; whoſe entire Union and Order it is no leſs his Advantage, than his Duty, by all proper Methods to preſerve and promote. And, that ſuch is the true Notion of *Edifying* in Scripture, will appear from a ſhort View of ſome of the Principal Paſſages, where the Word is uſed.

Thoſe Texts, which apply this Metaphor to the Church, or Body of Chriſt in common, are too plain to admit of any Diſpute: Such as ſtile it *God's Building, a Building fitly framed together*; Such as mention the *edifying of the Body*, and that *Body edifying of itſelf in love*, and the like. The only Difficulty lies in thoſe other Places, where the Word is made choice of, for direct-

1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 21. — iv. 12, 16.

directing particular Chriſtians, in the Diſcharge of their reſpective Offices; and where regard is had to their Improvement in ſome ſpecial Graces and Virtues, wherein we ſhould all labour to excel. Now, in the Proof of the Point I am upon, it ſhall be my Endeavour to ſhew, that, even in all theſe Places, there is a conſtant Regard had to the Unity and common Good of the Church, to the Benefit of our Brethren, and to the preventing any Breaches and Diviſions of Chriſtians from one another.

Nothing can be plainer, than that This is St. *Paul*'s Intent, in the *Fourteenth* and *Fifteenth* Chapters to the *Romans*. Among whom Some had been converted to Chriſtianity from Judaiſm, and Others from Gentiliſm. The Former ſort ſtill kept to ſome Diſtinctions of Days and Meats, preſcribed by the Levitical Law; and Theſe were cenſured by the Latter, as weak and ſuperſtitious. The Latter underſtood and aſſerted their Chriſtian Liberty; and Theſe were deſpiſed by the Former, as licentious and profane. This Matter was carried ſo high, that they ſcrupled communicating together in the publick Offices of Religion. Now, to bring Both upon better Terms, the Apoſtle expoſes the Sin of judging others, urges the Reaſonableneſs of ſuffering every one to abound in his own Senſe, and the Fitneſs of making Allowances to our Brethren, in Matters perfectly indifferent. And ſuch are Thoſe (but Thoſe only) which, neither in the Nature of the Thing, nor by any Law of God, or of our Superiors, as to the Uſe of them, are determined this or that way. And then, after having proved the Subjects in Debate to be of this kind, He adds,

Chap. xiv. 17, 18. *Let us follow the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edify another:* And again, *We that are*

Ver. 19,

Chap. xv. 1. *ſtrong ought to bear the Infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves:* (by rigorouſly inſiſting upon having Each his own Senti-

ments complied with in ſuch caſes) But *Let every one of us pleaſe his Neighbour for his Good unto Edification.* And what the Peace and Edification ſpoken of was intended to bring Men to, by ſuch mutual Condeſcenſions, the Apoſtle's Prayer juſt after ſufficiently declares, in theſe words, *Now the God of Patience and Conſolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Chriſt Jeſus; That ye may all with one mind and one mouth glorify God,* &c. That is, that there may be no Breach of Charity, or of Communion among you; but that your Love and Order may be teſtified, by mutual Condeſcenſions, and continuing to join together in the Acts of Religious Worſhip. *Ver.* 2. *Ver.* 5. *Ver.* 6.

The Church of *Corinth* fell under a like Inconvenience, by the Poſitiveneſs of Some, who, bearing themſelves out by a Maxim, that things which have no Being can have no Effect or Influence, took the Freedom to eat of Meats ſacrificed to Idols, to the great Scandal of their leſs nice and diſtinguiſhing Brethren. St. *Paul*, who allows their Reaſoning, as to their own Particular; yet utterly diſapproves the Practice grounded upon it. Becauſe, in Matters of ſuch Temper, the Peace of the Church, the Satisfaction of our Fellow Chriſtians, and the common Good, ought to reſtrain our Practice in the Uſe, whatever our Judgment be concerning the true State, of our Chriſtian Liberty. And therefore he tells them, *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* Expedience therefore is the juſt Abridgment of our Liberty in things lawful; and Edification is the juſt Meaſure of Expedience. Which he afterwards explains, by *No Man ſeeking his own, but every Man another's Wealth*, by *Doing all to the Glory of God*, by *Giving none offence*, by *Pleaſing* 1 Cor. viii. 1 Cor. x. 23. *Ver.* 24. *Ver.* 31. *Ver.* 32.

all

all Men in all things, and not *ſeeking his*
Ver. 33. *own profit, but the profit of many, that they*
may be ſaved.

To the ſame Church many falſe Teachers had crept in, who divided their Hearers into Sects, named after thoſe, by whoſe Miniſtry they had been converted and taught: And Theſe endeavoured to bring the Apoſtle's Perſon and Doctrine into Contempt. Finding ſome Reproofs in his *Firſt* Epiſtle ineffectual, he threatens theſe Separatiſts in his *Second*, with the Cenſures of the Church; which he very ſignificantly ſtyles an *Authority given him by the Lord, for the* Corinthians *Edification, and not for their Deſtruction.* Thoſe Puniſhments (that is) are deſigned to preſerve the Peace and Unity of Chriſt's Church; by caſting Them out, who corrupt, and divide, and, inſtead of building, pull down, and (as much as in them lies) tear to pieces, this ſpiritual Houſe, by ſetting up new Sects and Parties among Chriſtians.

1 Cor. i. 12. — iii. &c.

2 Cor. x. Ver. 8.

To the ſame purpoſes of Order, and Peace, and Adherence to their Regular Paſtors, the Context plainly proves the ſame word to be directed in the *Firſt* Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, (eſpecially if that Paſſage be compared with two others, almoſt parallel to it, in That to the *Hebrews*) *Comfort* (or exhort) *your ſelves together, and edify one another*; And *we beſeech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly in love for their Works ſake: And be at peace among yourſelves. And we exhort you, Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, ſupport the weak, be patient toward all Men.*

1 Theſſ. v. 11, 12, 13, 14. Heb. x. 25. — iii. 13.

Once

Once more, that this Word imports all thoſe things, by which Chriſtians can contribute to the quickning and heartening their Fellow-Chriſtians in their Duty, All, that may render their Minds eaſy and ſatisfied, couragious and reſolute under it, I think we may argue, by Parity of Reaſon, from that Expreſſion, 1 *Cor.* viii. 10. Where, ſpeaking of the Miſchiefs that might come to the leſs-knowing, by the ill Example of eating Idol-Sacrifices, the Apoſtle argues thus: *If any man ſee thee, which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the Idols Temple, ſhall not the Conſcience of him that is weak be emboldened* (ſo we read, but the *Greek* literally render'd, is, *be edified*) *to eat thoſe things which are offered to Idols?*

Theſe are, if not All, yet at leaſt the principal Texts, where the Word is deſigned to regulate the Behaviour of Chriſtians towards their Fellow-Members. Some few beſides there be, which more immediately reſpect Perſonal Improvements in particular Graces and Virtues. But a very ſhort view will prove, that, even in theſe alſo, the Thing chiefly aimed at, is the Peace and general Good of this Myſtical Body in common.

The Virtues this Expreſſion is apply'd to, (beſides thoſe of Love and Condeſcenſion, Union and Order, already ſpoken to) are but Two or Three.

The Firſt of Theſe is Faith. Which we have in St. *Jude*, when exhorting Men to *build themſelves up on their moſt holy Faith.* Of which Paſſage it is obſervable, That the Advice is given to the whole Community of the Diſciples, to whom that Epiſtle was written; That the Phraſe is not neceſſarily confined to each Man's Care of his Own Faith, but to the mutual Aſſiſtances, extended to the increaſe of One another's: But eſpecially, if we conſider the immediate Occaſion of this Council, and the ill Practices, to which it ſtands oppoſed; the Conſequence is evident, that Unity and Agreement

Ver. 20.

So 1 Theſ. v. 11.

greement is no leſs recommended, than Soundneſs and full Aſſurance in believing. For thus the Context runs, *Theſe* (the filthy Hereticks, diſorderly Murmurers, and profane Mockers, mentioned juſt before) *Theſe be they, who ſeparate themſelves, ſenſual, having not the Spirit*; *But ye, Beloved, building up* (or edifying) *your ſelves on your moſt holy Faith, praying in the Holy Ghoſt*; *Keep your ſelves in the Love of God*, &c. or (as that Phraſe may import) in Godly Charity and Concord; which alone can ſecure to us the Continuance of the Divine Favour, and is a neceſſary Evidence of our loving God.

Ver. 19, 20, 21.

1 John iii. 17. —iv. 20.

Another Excellence is that of Knowledge. And This ſeems chiefly to be concerned in St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe at the *Fourteenth* of his *Firſt* Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. There, treating of the Spiritual Gifts then frequently beſtow'd, he prefers that of Prophecy, before the ſpeaking in unknown Tongues. For which he gives this Reaſon, becauſe *He that ſpeaketh in an unknown Tongue, ſpeaketh not unto Men, but unto God: for no Man underſtandeth him*: And again, *He that propheſieth* in a Language intelligible, *ſpeaking unto Men to Edification*; but, by *ſpeaking with Tongues*, except they be interpreted, the Church cannot poſſibly *receive Edifying*. That is, Their Underſtandings could not be informed, nor any pious Affections excited, by Words of which they did not know the Meaning. I add the raiſing of pious Affections here, by reaſon of that Paſſage at the ivth Verſe, *He that ſpeaketh in an unknown Tongue edifyeth himſelf*: Which will very well fit this Conſtruction, but not that of Informing others. But ſtill the raiſing thoſe Affections ſeems plainly to ſuppoſe the Tongue then ſpoken in, *not unknown* to the Perſon ſpeaking, tho' it were unknown to them that heard. For ſure it is alto-

Ver. 1, 2.

Ver. 3.

Ver. 5.

altogether unaccountable, how either Speaker or Hearer ſhould, in any Senſe or Manner whatſoever, be *edified*, by Words not underſtood, either by Speaker or Hearer. The Apoſtle's Command therefore upon this Matter, is, That all Spiritual Gifts ſhould be uſed in ſuch manner, as might render them of moſt general Profit; Which is expreſſed by exhorting *them who were zealous of Spiritual Gifts*, to *ſeek that they might excel to the edifying of the Church.* The ſame is manifeſtly the Senſe of *Ver.* 17. *Thou verily giveſt Thanks well, but the other is not edified.* And at the 26th Verſe he adviſes, that, in their publick Aſſemblies, all the parts of Divine Worſhip might be ſo order'd, that nothing ſhould be done there for Oſtentation of any Man's particular Gifts; but all contrived for Uniformity and Decency, and the Profit of the whole Congregation. *How is it then, Brethren?* ſays he, *when you come together, every one of you hath a Pſalm, hath a Doctrine, hath a Tongue, hath a Revelation, hath an Interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying.* *Ver.* 12.

I obſerve farther, that Knowledge itſelf, though one ſort of Edification, is yet allow'd by St. *Paul* to be ſo, only upon Condition that it diſpoſes Men to Peace, and Love, and the common Good. Take it apart from theſe, and you ſee it repreſented as a Qualification, not only not deſirable, but very miſchievous. This evidently follows from that *Antitheſis* in the viiith of this Epiſtle; *Knowledge* (when they who have it abound in their own Senſe, and ſcandalize their weaker Brethren) *puffeth up, but Charity edifieth.* *Ver.* 1.

Once more, This Notion is confirmed by that Rule for common Converſation laid down *Eph.* iv. 29. that our Diſcourſe ſhould be *good to the uſe of Edifying.* The Greek, in Terms more expreſſive, reads it, *for the Edification of Uſe.* And the Apoſtle's Meaning ſeems

to

to be, that we ſhould always ſo comport ourſelves in Company; as not only to entertain, and render ourſelves agreeable to our Friends; but even to render Them practically wiſer and better, by what they ſhall hear from us.

I hope the Reader will not think me too tedious, at leaſt not uſeleſs, in adjuſting the Notion of Edification, as it is ſet forth to us in Scripture; Since from thence the following Inferences appear very naturally to be drawn.

1. That, although every thing, which hath a Tendency to Good, may in a larger Senſe be ſaid to *edify*; Yet a Man is not properly and truly *edified*, Either by any new Light or Knowledge acquired, Or by any pious Affections and Deſires kindled or cheriſhed in him; Unleſs Theſe prove and exert themſelves in the Acts of practical and profitable Virtues.

2. That, in order to render even the Practice of ſuch Virtues, ſtrictly *edifying*, it is requiſite, that the Benefit reſulting from thence, be not confined to the Doer's private Advantage; but that it aim at the Good of Others: Eſpecially the General Good of Religion; and of Chriſtians, conſidered as one Houſe built up together in the Faith and Love of Chriſt. Whereof Each, as *a living Stone*, is a part; and Each is bound to demean himſelf in all Points, as may become a Perſon, poſſeſſed with, and mindful of, that Perſuaſion.

3. That advancing the Peace, Order, and Unity of this common Body is, in Scripture Language, the true Chriſtian Edification. Conſequently, Whatſoever tends to make any Breach or Diviſion in that Body, is contrary to, and deſtructive of, Edification: Conſequently again, Separating from a regular eſtabliſh'd Church, Or leaving one's proper Paſtor, on pretence of *Edifying* more elſewhere, is not only wicked, but abſurd. As abſurd, as it would be to ſay, we intend to ſtrengthen a Wall by drawing out the Stones; Or, that we

deſign the Improvement of Health, Vigour, and Beauty, in the Body Natural; by unneceſſarily taking away the uſeful Limbs, and looſing the Ligaments, which ſhould compact and keep them in their Functions.

4. By the Apoſtle's urging this Edification of the Body in *Faith* and *Love*, as the great End of that Miniſtry eſtabliſhed by Chriſt and continu'd to the Church, Both Miniſters and People are moved to make ſuch Reflections as theſe. The Miniſters, and all who undertake to execute that Office, That they are highly accountable, if by their means any Hereſies or Schiſms get ground; if they do not faithfully warn the People againſt theſe things; detect the Artifices of Them, who lie in wait to deceive; expoſe the Error, the Sinfulneſs, the infinite both private and publick Danger of thoſe vile Latitudinarian Principles, which would not only break down the Walls, but undermine and root up the very Foundation, of this Spiritual Building. In ſhort, if they do not ſet forth the Wickedneſs of all needleſs and wilful, and the Miſery of all judicial and deſerved, Separations from the Church of Chriſt, with all the aggravating Circumſtances, ſo warmly, ſo frequently, inculcated in Scripture. For where, in truth, do we find any One Sin, more expreſly forbidden, more ſeverely threatned, or repreſented as more fatal and damnable, than thoſe of Diviſion and Hereſy? Were any Duty, more plainly taught, more authoritatively commanded, more earneſtly recommended, or more zealouſly prayed for, than thoſe of Unity, and Peace, and Love, in all the Fellow-Members of this Spiritual Body?

But, if the Teachers ſhall either touch this Matter too tenderly, or explain it too ſuperficially; The Hearers, in the Next Place, may, from the Paſſage now before us, learn both the Importance, and the Nature, of Their Duty in this Particular. The Importance indeed is ſo evident, that Few go about to deny it. But

the Nature of it ſhould be more attended to, than generally it ſeems to have been. At preſent I will ſuggeſt a ſhort Remark or Two, for the better underſtanding of it.

1. From the Connexion of this great Houſe, the Church Univerſal, in the ſeveral Apartments of it, (if I may ſo ſpeak) which are the Churches National; and ſo in every Subdiviſion downwards; it appears plainly to Me, that, where the Foundation is held, and no ſinful Terms of Communion impoſed, Every ſingle Perſon promotes or obſtructs, the Edification of the Body of Chriſt; as he holds or breaks Communion with that particular Church and Paſtor, to which he regularly belongs. It being thus only, and by the like gradual Progreſſions, (beginning from the Union of ſingle Perſons under their reſpective Guides, and riſing from particular Congregations to Diſtricts of larger Extent and Denomination,) that we come at laſt to the Union of each Part, with the whole Body of Chriſtians diffuſed all the World over; and that we are able to ſhew, how He, who is regularly joyned to the One, is, in virtue thereof, joined to the Other alſo.

2. From St. *Paul*'s reſembling the Church to a Human Body, the Manner, as well as the Conſequence of maintaining its Union, is likewiſe eaſy to be diſcerned. As, *That* This muſt be done by every little Veſſel (to which every private Chriſtian bears Proportion) doing its proper Office, in that Part, where Nature hath placed it. And, whatever Diſorder or Miſchief would follow in the One Caſe, from any Diſlocation or Defect of ſuch Veſſel: The like Deformity and Confuſion will as certainly enſue in the Other Caſe, as oft as any Member of the Body ſhall either perverſly depart from his Station, where Providence hath placed him; or ſlothfully neglect the Duties peculiar to it.

3. This I take to be yet farther confirmed, by that *Love*, mentioned here as the main Inſtrument of *Edification*.

ſication. For, though there be ſuch Paſſages, as confine this Word to the Relief of our Brethren in want and diſtreſs; I take it oftentimes to concern, more immediately, the Fellowſhip and friendly Communion of Chriſtians, expreſs'd by joining together in, and receiving one another to, the Ordinances and publick Offices of Religion. Some Inſtances of this kind I ſet down in the Margin, and a diligent Obſerver, I believe, will find many more. Theſe, when their particular Occaſions and Contexts are duly weighed, will ſhew this to be the firſt and moſt obvious Intent of the Word; and, that the other kind Offices and Diſpoſitions, in the Affairs of Human Life, are ſometimes its more Remote Meaning, and ſuch as reſult from the Former, as their natural Cauſe and Foundation. At leaſt, when Chriſtians are conſidered as One Body, or Religious Society, all other Love is imperfect, and indeed hardly to be, in any good Degree, kept up, without this.

See 1 Cor. viii. 1. —xiv. 1. 2 Cor. ii. 8. Phil. ii. 2. Coloſſ. ii. 2. Hebr. x. 24.

I only add, that there is one remarkable Difference, to the Advantage of the Spiritual Body, above the Natural and Artificial Bodies, whereto we find it compared. The Natural have their fixed Proportions and Maturity; The Artificial their ſet Dimenſions, which they cannot, nor are ever deſigned, to exceed: But the Spiritual is not at any time ſo bounded, that it ſhould be capable of no farther Improvements. And this is a noble Spur to our Diligence and Zeal, that our Faith and Love will always edify, and always increaſe this Body: will make it more ſtrong, more beautiful, more glorious, and enlarge as well as adorn it. Let us therefore labour, indefatigably labour, for ourſelves, and let us inceſſantly pray for *all Eſtates of Men in God's holy Church, that every Member of the ſame in his Vocation and Miniſtry may truly and godly ſerve Him.* That they may not be,

Coll. for Good Friday.

like Children, carried away with every blaſt of vain Doctrine, but ſo eſtabliſhed by his Grace in the Truth of Chriſt's *holy Goſpel, as to hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteouſneſs of Life.* Amen.

Coll. for S. Mark.

General Interceſſion.

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

St. John xv. 1.

1. The Union between me and you, (my Church) may be repreſented by a Vine: The Place and Uſes whereof I anſwer more fully, than any natural Vine can ever do: And my Father is the Owner, who takes care of the Plant, and receives the Fruits.

1. *I Am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

2. His care is ſeen, in cutting away the unprofitable, and cultivating the fruitful Branches, to render them ſtill more ſo.

2. *Every Branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

3. This Care you have partook of by the Inſtructions I have given you.

3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have ſpoken to you.*

4, 5. Let it now be your own care to preſerve and improve this Union, by living up to your Faith and Knowledge: Which is the only courſe to be fruitful; becauſe the Communication of my Spirit and Grace will depend upon it, with which you may do great things, but without it, nothing. No more than a Branch ſevered from, and having no Sap imparted by, the Vine, can bring forth Grapes.

4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

6. Beſides, ſuch Separation will prove not only unfruitful, but fatal. For a wicked Believer, like a Vine-Branch that bears not, is unprofitable, and deſtined to the Fire, (*i. e.* utter Deſtruction.)

6. *If a Man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and caſt them into the fire, and they are burned.*

7, 8, 9, 10. Whereas, on the other hand, the being fruitful in this reſpect ſhall engage a gracious Return to all your Prayers; promote my Father's Honour, by raiſing the Credit of Religion; and prove you my Diſciples

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye ſhall aſk what you will, and it ſhall be done unto you.*

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; ſo ſhall ye be my Diſciples.*

9. *As the Father hath loved me, ſo have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye ſhall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

ples indeed, by the Imitation of my Zeal and Obedience: Which ſhall alſo be followed by the like beneficial Returns from Me, as Mine are from my Father.

11. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

11. Theſe Conſiderations I leave with you, for the ſupport of your Spirits under any Difficulties in your Duty; and to ſoften the Grief for my abſence, by inward Comforts, reſulting from this Spiritual Union between us.

COMMENT.

THE tender Jeſus, deſigning probably to comfort his Apoſtles under the terrible Apprehenſions of his Departure from them, begins this Chapter with an Account of ſuch an Union between him and his Diſciples, as ſhould abundantly compenſate the want of his Perſonal Preſence and Converſation. The Intimacy, The beneficial Effects of this Union, The Duty, The Manner, The Neceſſity of preſerving it, and the irreparable Miſeries of a Separation, are all moſt elegantly and ſignificantly ſet forth, by the Parabolical Repreſentation of a Vine and its Branches: the illuſtrating whereof in ſome uſeful Meaſure ſhall be the Buſineſs of this Diſcourſe.

1. The Intimacy of this Union is abundantly plain, from the Choice of a Tree and its Branches, as a fit Emblem to repreſent it. For the clearer underſtanding whereof, and of the peculiar Elegance and Propriety in this Similitude, Two things ſhould be attended to. The One, that from the reſt of the Trees a Vine is ſingled out. Any of Them would well enough have ſignified the Cloſeneſs of the Union; but ſome Other Effects and Conſiderations relating to This, are much more emphatically ſhewn in a Vine, than in any common Tree. Thoſe Interprerers no doubt have judged very rightly, who applaud the Wiſdom of this Choice, upon the account of the many Vineyards in that Country: From whence our Saviour frequently raiſes Parables, becauſe every Part of ſuch Compariſons could not but be very intelligible to his Hearers; and They, who conſtantly dealt in the Alluſion, might more eaſily apply,

and diſcern the Intent of Matter and Expreſſions ſo familiar to them.

But there ſeems to have been a yet greater Inducement to this Choice, from the very Nature of the thing it ſelf: In regard of the Vine bearing a Fruit more generous, and bearing in greater Abundance. This renders it (as our Lord in the Paſſage here takes notice) more worthy the Tiller's Care. And yet (which is greatly to the Purpoſe of this Parable too) that noble, that delicious Plant, ſo highly valued when proſperous, is yet, when barren, more vile and refuſe than any other Tree.

But then it muſt be obſerved in the next Place, that, when our Lord ſpeaks of himſelf as this Vine, (as in the *Firſt* Verſe) we are to underſtand Chriſt taken in the Complex Senſe; for Him and his Church, Root and Branches, (as elſewhere in Scripture Head and Body) together. But when (in the following Verſes) the Tree is diſtinguiſhed into its parts; then Chriſt is the Root and Trunk, and Chriſtians are the Branches, of a piece with, ſhooting out of, nouriſhed by, and living with, in and through Him.

1 Cor. xii. 12.

The Other Heads relating to this Matter, will appear in their beſt Light, by conſidering and explaining our Lord's Allegorical Repreſentation of it, in the Order St. *John* hath recorded it. By which Method ſeveral Beauties of the Parable will ſhew themſelves, which are not ſo eaſy to be preſerved, if the Whole be taken aſunder, and caſt into diſtinct Topicks of Diſcourſe.

The *Firſt* Proof of the Importance and Benefit of this Union is the great Care, which the Huſbandman, or Owner of this Vine, eſteems the Preſervation and Improvement of it worth. A Care, extended to every ſingle Branch, in ſuch Manner as Each is capable of, and as the Common Good of the Whole may beſt be ſerved and promoted by,

To

To this purpoſe he is ſaid to *take away* the barren, and to *purge the bearing Branches*, *Ver.* 2. By entring into Covenant with God at Baptiſm we are grafted into the Body of Chriſt's Church, and become Branches of this Spiritual Vine. And, in Proportion as we afterwards continue in, or ſwerve and fall off from, the holy Purpoſes of Faith and Obedience then contracted for, we are eſteemed to bear or not to bear Fruit. So that by the Work of the Cultivater here mentioned, are repreſented the different Diſpenſations of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, ſuited to the ſeveral Circumſtances of particular Believers, and to the Honour and Advantage of the Chriſtian Religion in general.

Thus it is often ſeen, that Almighty God does, by ſome ſignal Judgments, bring down, or quite cut off wicked and powerful Oppreſſors; who *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; cruſh the Righteous, corrupt the Principles, and diſcourage the Practice, of Piety and Virtue. The Proſperity and Inſolence of Such renders their Condition like, and therefore requires that their Fate too ſhould be like, to that of wild and luxuriant Suckers: Neceſſary to be taken away; becauſe they impoveriſh the Tree, and keep the Fatneſs of the Root from others, while they continue an uſeleſs Burden to it themſelves.

On the other hand, the hopeful vigorous Shoots are cheriſhed and encouraged. Theſe the Maſter of the Vineyard digs about and dungs, or prunes, or trims, to advance their Fertility yet more. That is, God inſtructs, ſtrengthens, favours, comforts, remarkably proſpers; Or, if that be needful, he afflicts, corrects, tries, and diſtinguiſhes well diſpoſed People; that they may grow and ſhine in Knowledge, and Goodneſs, and all Spiritual Graces. In ſhort, He ſpares no proper Pains, denies no fitting Opportunities, for the Promotion of that Holineſs, which is the main End aimed at, by the Miniſtry of his Word, by the Aſſiſtances of his Grace,

and by the various Methods of a Providence, which never fails to make *all things work together for the Good of them that love and fear God.*

Rom. viii. 28.

Next follows an earneſt Exhortation to Perſeverance, grounded upon ſundry Arguments illuſtrating this Union. As *Firſt*, The Neceſſity of a ſtedfaſt Adherence to Chriſt, in order to the Preſervation of our Spiritual Life. Becauſe the whole Subſtance and efficient Cauſe of this is as neceſſarily derived from Him, as the Fruitfulneſs of the Branches depends upon the Root. They, if the Communications from hence be intercepted, are inſignificant and uſeleſs; We, upon loſing the like kindly Influences from the myſtical Vine, fall under an univerſal Impotence, and have no longer the leaſt Ability to do good.

Ver. 4.

The Advantages of this Union, when faithfully preſerved, are next repreſented. And that is preſerved by *abiding in Chriſt*. An Expreſſion, intended no doubt to denote the Continuance of our ſerious Reſolutions and ſincere Endeavours of that Obedience, which was ſtipulated for, when we were firſt incorporated with him. The Profit of This is ſet forth by a vaſt Increaſe capable of being produced, in Virtue of thoſe plentiful and perpetual Communications, to which our Conjunction with the Root gives a Title, and which the Root never fails to ſupply, in their proper Seaſons and Meaſures. Theſe are the Aſſiſtances of Divine Grace, in which the very Spirit and Life of Chriſtians, as ſuch, conſiſts. It is this, that excites, that improves, that maintains our Holineſs. Nature is inſufficient; for That is diſeaſed and decayed. Reaſon is too weak to conquer our Prejudices and Paſſions. The Beſt Diſpoſition cannot bear up againſt corrupt Habits and violent Temptations. A Principle above all theſe is requiſite, to repair our Breaches, to enlighten and purify our Minds, to perſuade as well as convince,

Ver. 5.

to incline, to guide, and to determine our Wills. Natural Actions are performed by a natural Concurrence, and by ſuch Co-operations of God as are common to all his Creatures. But *that which is Spirit muſt be born of the Spirit*, and Goſpel-Virtues cannot ſpring from any other Original, than Goſpel-Grace. The moſt exalted Goodneſs is a more liberal Gift, but the loweſt degree of it is alſo a Gift. They, who paſs for Perſons of larger Abilities and Attainments, are indeed diſtinguiſhed from the Vulgar. But What diſtinguiſhed them? Not any inherent Power; or natural Excellencies of their own; but the free Diſtributions of that Lord, who entruſted them with more of his Talents. Let therefore the Increaſe be never ſo great; This ought to mortify our Vanity, that the Fund we traffick upon is another's. For, whatever may be allowed us in other Capacities, yet, when conſidered as Branches, We bear not the Root, but the Root Us. And, whence our very vital Principle, the Source of all our Vigour and Activity is drawn, no words can more peremptorily declare, than theſe of our Lord; Who urges the Neceſſity of the mutual abiding, by good Purpoſes on Our part, and by the Diſtributions of Grace on His; from this unanſwerable Argument, that *without* Him we *can do nothing*.

Mean while theſe frequent Commands of *abiding* in Chriſt, after the manner I have explained, and the Promiſes of Reward to them that do ſo, ſuggeſt to us One remarkable Difference, between the Natural and the Myſtical Vine. It is, That the Former is merely paſſive in all its Productions, the Other not ſo. And therefore, though the Barrenneſs of the Natural Branches be a Misfortune only, yet that of the Spiritual is ſtrictly a Crime. Hence we are called upon to *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit*; exhorted not *to receive the Grace of God in vain*; forbidden to *re-*

2 Cor. vii. 1. —vi. 1.

ſiſt,

ſiſt, to *quench*, to *grieve his holy Spirit*; commanded to *work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*; upon this Encouragement, that ſuch Labour ſhall not be in vain, becauſe it is *God which worked in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* In ſhort, the Ability to act is from God, but the Act is from our ſelves, when ſo enabled. When God had ſet *David's Heart at liberty*, he then reſolved and ran the *way of his Commandments.* When *Chriſt* had ſtrengthened St. *Paul*, he could then *do all things.* Without that Enlargement from the Slavery of Luſts and vicious Habits, *David* could not have taken one ſtep in God's Way. Without that Strength, St. *Paul* could not have performed any one of all the things he ſpoke of: *David* could not enlarge his own Heart, Neither could the Apoſtle ſtrengthen himſelf: But it was the Act, and therefore the Virtue, of the One to *run* when *thus ſet free*; And of the Other, to *do* all he was ſo enabled for. And indeed, Were it otherwiſe; all the Commands and Promiſes, all Prohibitions and Threatnings, (of which there are very many) relating to this Matter, are Mockery and Vanity. For why are They perſuaded, who cannot comply? Or commanded, who cannot obey; Or threatned, who cannot rebel; Or called upon to work together with God, if they can do nothing when he aſſiſts? Though what they do, it is confeſſed, they could not do, without his gracious Prevention and Aſſiſtance.

Eph. iv. 30. Phil. ii. 12. Ver. 13. Pſal. cxix. 32. Phil. iv. 13.

In Another Reſpect indeed theſe two Vines do but too well agree. So far I mean, as the barren parts of Each are concerned. The Branches cut off from moſt other Trees, are of Subſtance and Service; But thoſe of the Vine Men ſet no Value upon. They are trodden under Foot with Contempt, and the Fire is the end of them.

them. Thus Chriſtians, in the Parallel, who profit not under the Influences of Grace, are the worſt and moſt deplorable part of Mankind. The Lewd and Scandalous Profeſſors of this beſt Religion fall from the moſt glorious Advantages into the moſt abandoned State of any; and leave themſelves no more Poſſibility of any middle Condition, than Nature hath allowed the Tree, whereto they are here reſembled. It is either the moſt noble, or the moſt deſpicable Plant of all the Vegetable World: Chriſtians are likewiſe, of the Moral World, the moſt generous, or the moſt unprofitable part. Objects, that beſt deſerve Eſteem and Admiration; or elſe that moſt juſtly provoke Indignation, and Scorn, and Reproach.

But this is not all. For, if Some be (as alas too many are) ſo loſt to Modeſty and Shame, as to have quite out-grown all regard to the Opinion of Men; yet let thoſe hardened Wretches underſtand, that there is ſtill behind an Affliction which will be felt, awaiting their Unfruitfulneſs. The Vine, as it contributes not to its own Barrenneſs, ſo neither does it feel the Diſgrace and the Curſe of it. But theſe Spiritual Branches chooſe and affect their own Barrenneſs; And therefore the Effect of this to Them is a Puniſhment ſtrictly ſo called; in which they can be no more unconcerned, than they were in the obſtinate Diſobedience that deſerved it. A dreadful and irreverſible Sentence of final Extermination from Heaven and Happineſs; Everlaſting Flames kindled by the Breath of an Angry God; And the inſupportable Agonies of a never-dying Worm, gnawing their guilty Breaſts perpetually with the bittereſt Remorſe and Self-Condemnation. Upon this Account our Bleſſed Lord reſumes his former Argument; ſhewing, that the Miſery of Separation from Him, and of Unfruitfulneſs under his Communications, doth not determine in merely being unprofitable; but that they expoſe Men to the utmoſt

Extre-

Extremities of ſuffering. For ſuch, he tells us, are *caſt forth and withered*; they are rejected by God, and, by withdrawing of the Grace they had abuſed, they loſe the vital Principle of their Souls. And not only ſo, but they are *gathered* and *burned*, fitted up for Deſtruction, ſnatched away in Fury, and thrown into Hell.

Ver. 6.

On the contrary, the Advantages of Improvement under the Grace and Goſpel of Chriſt are alſo to our ſelves. And many encouraging Motives are urged to quicken us in it. This Spirit is ſaid to be the *Pledge of our Adoption*, the Inſtrument of our *Sanctification*, the *Seal of our Inheritance and Redemption:* The *Spirit, which in our Hearts cries Abba, Father*, by which *we have acceſs to God*, which *helps our Infirmities* when we approach him, and is an Aſſurance, that let us *aſk what we will*, it *ſhall be done unto us*. Theſe laſt are our Saviour's own Words here. Confined indeed by ſome Interpreters to the Apoſtles: As a Promiſe of full Power to work all ſuch Miracles, as they ſhould find neceſſary, and apply to their Lord for his Aſſiſtance in, whereby Unbelievers might be convinced, and his Truth get Credit in the World. But, as the Union, and the Grace conſequent upon it, do evidently extend no every Chriſtian, every Branch of this Myſtical Vine; ſo does the Promiſe of the Reward here extend to doubt to all, who abide in that Union by a diligent and humble uſe of that Grace. And therefore I will very briefly ſhew, how valuable a Privilege this is, and how it is really made good to every ſincere Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt.

Rom. viii. 13, 15.
Eph. i. 13, 14.
—iv. 30.
Gal. iv. 6.
Eph. ii. 18.
Rom. viii. 26.

To thoſe, who at all reflect upon the preſent State of Human Nature, to what unſpeakable Variety of Weakneſſes and Wants we ſtand expoſed; and how perfectly unable the Beſt and Greateſt among us are, to

ſuccour

ſuccour the One, or to ſupply the Other; What can be more deſirable, than Acceſs with Eaſe and Confidence to Him, whoſe Help we always ſtand in need of, and who is always mighty to help? To Him, from whoſe ſingle Hand all the Relief we are capable of, does and muſt come? And what can be a more powerful Incitement to pleaſe and ſerve him faithfully, than to be ſatisfied, that this will effectually recommend us to his Favour, open his Ear to our Requeſts, and ſo far prevent our at any time Addreſſing in vain; that, in all things ſeaſonable and convenient for us, even our own Hearts cannot be more liberal in wiſhing, than God will approve himſelf in giving.

Now this is every Good Man's Happineſs. Such have in effect whatſoever they aſk; becauſe Such always aſk in an humble and dutiful Submiſſion to the Will of their Heavenly Father. For in all Prayer there is a general Reſerve to be implied and underſtood, how expreſs and particular ſoever the Form and Words of the Petition may be. This is what not only ſhould be, in point of Deference and Duty, to a Being of Infinite Wiſdom; but it is and muſt be ſo in the very Reaſon of the Thing. For, when our Prayers ſpecify any Object by Name, this proceeds from a preſent Apprehenſion of that Object being proper for, and good to us. In which Notion, the Moment we were made ſenſible of a Miſtake, that Object would ceaſe to excite our Deſires, and we ſhould deprecate, inſtead of aſking it. Hence then it follows, that there muſt be, in the very Nature of Prayer rationally put up, a tacit Referring of ourſelves to Him, whom we cannot but acknowledge to underſtand the Condition of our Affairs, and the Conſequences of granting what we aſk, much better than ourſelves do. It is the Virtue then, It is the Wiſdom, Nay, it is the neceſſary and conſtant Meaning, of every one who prays according to Knowledge, to inſert, mentally and intentionally at leaſt,

this Clauſe into all his Supplications, that *God would ſo fulfil the Deſires of his Servant, as may be moſt expedient for him.* And thus our Saviour's Promiſe here is moſt true, *Ye ſhall aſk what ye will, and it ſhall be done unto you.* For ſuch Diſciples as he ſpeaks of here, have no peremptory and determinate Will of their own; but ſuch only as, though diſpoſed to ſome Objects rather than Others, agreeably to the preſent Meaſure of their Underſtandings, is yet always ſubordinate and reſigned to the Wiſer and Better Will of Him from whom they aſk. *Ver.* 7.

The Other Advantages of Fruitfulneſs, which follow, are, The Honour of God and Religion, The juſtifying their own Character and Sincerity to the World, And the Return of Chriſt's Love, continued and exemplified in all the Inſtances of Kindneſs, which reſemble that of God to his Only Begotten Son. Some, confining this Paſſage as was intimated before, by the great Quantity of Fruit expected here underſtand the prodigious Number of Converts, and the glorious Succeſſes of the Chriſtian Faith, which thoſe Apoſtles ſo zealouſly laboured after; And, that our Lord's Intention was at that time to excite and inflame their Zeal, from a Conſideration, how greatly the Propagation and Eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel would redound to His and his Father's Honour; and how well it would become Them, who profeſſed to retain to Him as their Maſter. For, by *being his Diſciples*, at the *Eighth* Verſe, cannot be meant their now becoming ſuch: Such they already were, and had been for a long time. But the true Intent of that Expreſſion is, that this was the way to appear, and manifeſt to the World, that they are ſuch. A Phraſe of much like Importance with that in the *Thirteenth* of this Goſpel; where it is ſaid of mutual Love, *By this ſhall all Men know, that ye are my Diſciples.* As Charity there, ſo Fruitfulneſs here, is recommended for a diſtinguiſh- *Ver.* 35.

ing Mark, and ſure Indication, to whom they belong.

But, as I ſaid, ſince not They only, but We, and all Chriſtians, are Branches of this Vine; And ſince Bearing will be required from every Branch; it will behove us to examine, What Fruit it is, which this Relation to Chriſt is fitted to produce, and upon the Product whereof all the Hopes and Happineſs of them, who have the Honour to be ſo related, do depend.

When our Bleſſed Saviour directs us to judge of the Tree by its Fruit; his Meaning is, that the Conſequences, viſible whether in the Opinions or Actions of Men, will naturally be of the ſame piece and kind, with the Principles from whence they are drawn. Now the Spirit and Grace of God, (the ordinary Influences whereof are imparted to Chriſtians as ſuch, for the general Conduct of their Lives) being that very vital Principle, which renders the Branches of this Myſtical Vine capable of bearing; The ready way of learning what it is expected we ſhould bear, is to enquire, what thoſe Diſpoſitions and Actions are, which the Scripture hath taken notice of, as Effects moſt genuine and peculiar to the Operations of this Divine Spirit in the Hearts of Men.

Now in this Matter it is very eaſy to inform our ſelves. For St. *Paul* acquaints us, that *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance.* And again, *The Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, and Truth.* To the ſame purpoſe St. *Peter* exhorts Men, that, *giving all Diligence,* they would *add to their Faith Virtue,* and to *Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godlineſs, and to Godlineſs Brotherly Kindneſs, and to Brotherly Kindneſs Charity.* All which he enforces with this

Galat. v. 22, 23.

Epheſ. v. 9.

2 Pet. i. 5.

Ver. 6.

Ver. 7.

this Argument, moſt exactly oppoſite to the Subject I am upon, *For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* In like manner we read of *having our Fruit unto Holineſs*, of *bringing forth Fruit unto God*, of *being fruitful in every good Work*, of *being filled with the Fruits of Righteouſneſs*, of *the Wiſdom from above* (which is but another Name for the Grace now in treating of) *full of Mercy and good Fruits*; And a Multitude of other Paſſages there are, much to the ſame Importance.

Ver. 8.

Rom. vi. 22. — vii. 4.

Col. i. 10.

Phil. i. 11.

Jam. iii. 17.

Theſe are the Virtues, which ſhone ſo bright in the Mind and Converſation of our Bleſſed Lord; The Root, in whom the Fulneſs of this Spirit dwelt. Theſe therefore are the Product, which muſt prove every Profeſſon of his Doctrine to be a genuine and living Branch of this myſtical Vine. And therefore Men need not go far for Satisfaction in this Point, nor puzzle themſelves with dark and intricate Queſtions, about the Signs of their Union with Chriſt; ſince theſe are ſo eaſily diſcernable, and the only true Marks of it. All which indeed is ſufficiently intimated to us, by thoſe Words at the *Tenth* Verſe, *If ye keep my Commandments, ye ſhall abide in my Love: Even as I have kept my Father's Commandments, and abide in his Love.*

But, in regard the Commandments of God extend to all the Circumſtances and Conditions of Men; And thoſe Moral Virtues, mentioned by St. *Paul* juſt now as the genuine Fruits of the Spirit, are of ſuch different Sorts, as not poſſibly to be put in Practice at one and the ſame time; Therefore, in order to our bearing much Fruit, it ſuffices, that we be habitually diſpoſed to All; but that we be actually exerciſed in Such

of

of them only, as the preſent Occaſion requires. And in the Choice of theſe our different Relations and Capacities, our different Fortunes and Events in the World, muſt determine us. For, as that Branch is Fruitful, which bears in Proportion to the Advantages of its Place and Situation, though not the richeſt Fruit of the whole Tree; So is that Diſciple eſteemed to bear much Fruit, who makes it his conſtant Care to do all that good, which the Abilities and Opportunities afforded him by God, render him capable of. Indeed it is here, as in the Parable of the Sower; Which, although ſome brought forth a hundred, and other ſixty, yet allows that, which brought forth but thirty, to be good Ground. In one Word, Here is no room for Diſcouragement or Complaint, no tolerable Pretence for Sloth or Deſpondency. The Vine communicates its Sap and Fatneſs to Every Branch; And, though All do not partake of this in equal Meaſure, yet Each is accountable for ſuch Increaſe, as may anſwer to the Quantity received. Be then our Station high or low; Be our Attainments ſlender or large; Whoever He be, that diſcharges the ſeveral Duties in that Poſt, in which Providence has placed him; Whoever improves the Degrees of Grace afforded him, to the beſt of his Skill and Power; this Man *abides in the Vine*, and does not only *bear*, but *bear much Fruit*.

I ſhall make a brief Reflection or Two, and ſo conclude.

1. My Reader will readily obſerve the Agreement between the Epiſtle and Goſpel for this Day. Which, though repreſenting it under different Images, do Both agree, in deſcribing the Union betwixt Chriſt and Chriſtians. Both tend to illuſtrate the Advantages of it; Both earneſtly excite our utmoſt Diligence to preſerve it. With this only Difference; that St. *Paul* inſiſts upon the Benefits accruing from thence to the Body in general; But our Lord regards thoſe chiefly,

which belong to each Member in particular. From Both together, we may form an unanſwerable Argument, for the keeping that Unity, and promoting that Edification; which, if neglected and broken, is certain, not only to diſturb the Peace of the Church, but by cutting off, to deſtroy at laſt, thoſe very Perſons, who are guilty of making the Breach. For it is by Grace only, that Men can be ſaved. That Grace is no where promiſed to be given in an extraordinary way. It is firſt beſtowed in, and ordinarily annexed to, the Uſe of the Sacraments, the Miniſtry of the Word, and other Chriſtian Ordinances; called, for that Reaſon, *Means of Grace*. What therefore can become of thoſe Branches, who are ſevered from all Communication with the Trunk? And how careful ought every one to be, neither to break himſelf off wilfully; Nor, by any unworthy and ſcandalous Behaviour, to incur a Forfeiture of thoſe kindly Influences; Nor by a profane Abuſe or ſupine Neglect of thoſe Religious Offices, which are appointed to convey them, to draw down the Fate of thoſe ſapleſs Boughs, whoſe preſent Curſe (we are told here) is Withering and Decay, and whoſe End is to be burned!

2. I would call upon my Reader to take notice, how pious, and prudent, and exactly agreeable to our Lord's Declaration that *without Him we can do nothing*, our Excellent eſtabliſhed Liturgy is. In This we daily acknowledge, that *all holy Deſires, and all good Counſels, and all juſt Works proceed from God*. In This, after the moſt exalted Act of Worſhip, we pray to be *prevented* with *his moſt gracious Favour, and furthered with his continual Help, that in all our Works begun, continued, and ended in him, we may glorify his holy Name, and finally by his Mercy obtain everlaſting Life*. The Acknowledgments of this kind are frequent and full. No Church ever took

Second Collect Evening Service.

Prayer in the end of the Communion Service.

took more Care to declare her Senſe of the Vanity and Danger of relying upon our own Sufficiency: None magnifies the Freedom, None urges the Neceſſity, of Divine Grace more induſtriouſly: None begs it with more Humility and pathetic Zeal: And They, who pray in Dependance of our Saviour's Promiſe to hear thoſe that abide in Him, cannot implore his Aſſiſtance more ſuitably, than in ſome of the Collects noted in the Margin *: That particularly for the *Ninth* Sunday after *Trinity*; With which (it comes ſo cloſe up to the Scripture now in Hand) I will finiſh this Diſcourſe.

* *Adv.* S. 1, 4. *Epiph.* 1, 4. *Lent* 1, 2. *Eaſter-Day. Sund.* 2, 3, 4, 5. *Trinity Sunday* 1, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25.

Grant to us, Lord, we beſeech thee, the Spirit to think and do always ſuch things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy Will, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

St. PHILIP *and St.* JAMES's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. PHILIP.

THE Firſt of St. *John*'s Goſpel informs us, that *Philip* was of *Bethſaida*; that he was called by our Saviour, the Day after *Andrew* and *Peter*; and was the Inſtrument of bringing *Nathanael* firſt to Jeſus. It does not appear, by what Authority *Clemens* of *Alexandria* makes him the Perſon, who, when called by our Lord, deſired leave to *go home* firſt *and bury his Father*. Which occaſioned that Reply, *Follow me, and let*

John i. 43, 44, 45, 46.

Strom. III. p. 436.

Matth. viii. 21, 22.

the dead bury their dead. Our Lord, to try his Faith, proposed to Him the Difficulty of feeding the Multitudes in the Wilderness. To Him, the *Greeks*, who desired to see Jesus at the Feast, made their first Address. And with Him our Lord had the Discourse of shewing his Disciples the Father, explained in the Paraphrase of the Gospel for this Day.

John vi. 5, 6, 7. —xii. 20, 21.

He is said to have preached in the upper *Asia*, to have wrought many Miracles in *Hierapolis*, a City of *Phrygia*, now called by the *Turks*, *Pambuc Kulasi*, from the Rocks about it, which are white, like Cotton. There is another *Hierapolis* in *Syria*, which some have thought the Modern *Aleppo*; Others, more probably, the Old *Beroe*, or *Berrhæa*. In the former of these Places (that of *Phrygia*) it is, that this Apostle is said to have suffered Martyrdom, by being fastened to a Cross, and stoned to Death. He was a married Man, and had three Daughters. Two whereof died Virgins at *Hierapolis*. The Third died at *Ephesus*, and appears from a Passage in *Clemens Alexandr.* to have been married. These were Persons inspired by the Holy Ghost, and are reckoned among the Lights of the *Asiatick* Churches. We know not of any Writings he left behind him, though the Gnosticks are said to have alledged some such, in Defence of Their Heresy.

Chrys. in 12 Apost.

Euseb. Hist. Lib. V. C. 24. Clem. Alex. Strom. III. p. 448. Dr. Cave from Epiphan. Heres. 26.

A short Account of St. JAMES the Less.

HE was the Son of *Alpheus* or *Cleopas*, Brother to *Jude*, and the Brother, (according to the Use of that Word among the Jews, which extends it to all near Relations) or Cousin-German,

Matth. x. 3. —xvii. 56.

German, of our Lord. Diſtinguiſhed from the other *James*, *Zebedee*'s Son, by the Title of *James the Leſs*; and known alſo by the Title of *James the Juſt*. This laſt Denominatin ſeems to have been given him, on account of his extraordinary Sanctity. Which was ſuch, that he is ſaid to have the Privilege of entring at Pleaſure into the Holy Place; and, for an Evidence of his Piety and Perſeverance in Prayer, his Knees are ſaid, by conſtant Kneeling, to have been hardned like to Camels Hoofs. The Year after our Lord's Paſſion, he was by the Apoſtles made Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*: As ſuch, He preſided in the Debates concerning Circumciſion, *Acts* xv. and is ſtyled by St. *Paul* one of the *Pillars*, and named before *Peter* and *John*.

John xix. 25. *See* Pearſon *Creed*, *Art.* III. *p.* 176. Gal. i. 19. Euſeb. *Hiſt.* II. *C.* 1. Hieron. *in Catal.* *See* Pearſ. *Lect.* iv. *in Act. Apoſt.* Galat. ii. 9.

He wrote the Epiſtle, which goes under his Name, as a Check, moſt probably, to the Errors of ſome converted Jews: Who laid the whole Streſs of Chriſtianity upon Faith, and an outward Profeſſion of the Truth; and leſſened the Regard due to good Works and a truly Chriſtian Converſation.

The Occaſion and Manner of his Death is related with the following Circumſtances. The Governing Part of the Jews, enraged at the Diſappointment of their Malice againſt St. *Paul* by his Appeal to *Cæſar*, revenged it upon St. *James*. The Death of *Feſtus* gave them an Opportunity of acting in this Matter more arbitrarily, than otherwiſe they durſt have done. In the Interval therefore between That, and the Arrival of the Succeſſor *Albinus*, *Ananus* the High Prieſt ſummoned St. *James*, and required him to renounce the Chriſtian Faith. For the compelling him to do this in the moſt public manner, he was carried up to the Battlements of the

Acts xxvi. Hieron. *Catal.* Euſeb. *Hiſt.* *Lib.* II. *C.* 23.

Temple, and threatned to be caſt down, in Caſe of Refuſal. He, on the contrary, with greater Vehemence confeſſed and exhorted to the Faith of Chriſt, in the Preſence of thoſe, who met to hear his Renunciation of him. Provoked by ſuch inflexible Conſtancy, they threw him headlong down. The Fall broke his Legs, yet he prayed: The Rabble below received him with Showers of Stones; and at laſt One with a Club, ſuch as is uſed by Fullers in dreſſing their Cloaths, gave him a Blow on the Head, after which he preſently expired. A Fact, condemned even by their own Hiſtorian, and ſaid by Him to be ſo, by all Perſons who bore any Regard to Juſtice, or the Laws. Inſomuch, that for this Offence againſt Both, the High-Prieſt, by whoſe Authority it was committed, was in a few Months degraded, and another put in his ſtead.

Joſeph *Antiq. Lib.* XX. *C.* 8.

The COLLECT.

John xvii. 3. — xiv. 6.

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlaſting Life; Grant us perfectly to know thy Son Jeſus Chriſt to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that, following the Steps of thy holy Apoſtles St. *Philip* and St. *James*, we may ſtedfaſtly walk in the Way that leadeth to Eternal Life, through the ſame thy Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

The EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE. — James i. 1.

1. *James*, Biſhop of *Jeruſalem* the Metropolis of the Jews, to all of that Nation whereſoever diſperſed, who are converted to the Chriſtian Faith, wiſhes Health, and Proſperity.

1. JAmes, *a ſervant of God and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to the twelve tribes which are ſcattered abroad, greeting.*

2. Be not diſcouraged, but rejoyce, at Afflictions, Thoſe eſpecially, which God ſends for the ſake of your Religion, and to prove your Virtue and Conſtancy.

2. *My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into diverſe temptations;*

3.

3. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

3. And that for this very good reaſon, becauſe ſuch Tryals exerciſe your Patience.

4. *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

4. A Virtue, which, if improved to its juſt Height, will contribute greatly to your Chriſtian Perfection.

5. *If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him.*

5. If any therefore want Wiſdom to manage theſe Tryals aright, let him pray for it to God, who is always ready to grant it.

6. *But let him aſk in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind, and toſſed.*

7. *For let not that man think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord.*

6, 7. But theſe Prayers muſt be made with a full Perſuaſion of God's Power and Goodneſs, and firm Reſolutions of doing our own Duty: Otherwiſe they will not be ſucceſsful.

8. *A double-minded man is unſtable in all his ways.*

8. And a Man divided in his own Thoughts will never ſtick cloſe to any thing.

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoyce in that he is exalted:*

9. Let the Chriſtian in mean Circumſtances think his Poverty abundantly compenſated, by the Opportunities this furniſhes for the Advancement of his Faith and Virtue.

10. *But the rich, in that he is made low: becauſe as the flower of the graſs he ſhall paſs away.*

11. *For the ſun is no ſooner riſen with a burning heat, but it withereth the graſs, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the faſhion of it periſheth: ſo alſo ſhall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

10, 11. Let him alſo, who is fallen from a wealthy and proſperous Condition, be well pleaſed with that Change, which gives him a Title to ſolid and ſubſtantial Bleſſings, inſtead of that Worldly Proſperity, than which nothing can be more fading and inconſtant.

12. *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.*

12. Happy therefore is that Man, who perſeveres in his Integrity; becauſe he ſhall not fail of that exceeding glorious and eternal Reward, by which God, who cannot break his Word, hath engaged to diſtinguiſh Them, who, by continuing faithful in his Service, prove that they love and value nothing in Compariſon of Him and his Favour.

COMMENT.

THE Condition of the Jews had, for ſeveral Ages before our Bleſſed Saviour's coming into the World, been very diſtreſſed. Indeed, ever ſince the carrying away of the Ten Tribes by *Salmaneſer*, and the Captivity of *Babylon*, which followed ſhortly after under *Nebuchadnezzar*; Great Numbers of them had been ſcattered abroad in foreign Countries: and were not only deprived of the Opportunities to ſettle and embody themſelves, as formerly, in their own Land; but found very unkind Treatment from the Nations, among which they ſojourned. The Caſe in this reſpect was not at all amended, but indeed made worſe, to Thoſe of them, whom the irreſiſtible Evidences of Truth had brought in to the Acknowledgment and Obedience of the Chriſtian Faith. Such had now, not only the Malice of the Heathens among whom they lived, to encounter; but the yet more implacable Envy and Rage of the far greater part of their own Countrymen, who ſtill continued in Obſtinacy and Unbelief. The Contempt and Prejudices of the Former, and the blind and bitter Zeal of the Latter, had extinguiſhed all Humanity; and inſtigated them to Perſecutions, in which Cruelty was even reputed a Virtue.

2 Kings xvii. —xxv.

Under ſuch Circumſtances, theſe Perſons were moſt proper to be addreſſed to by the Apoſtle of this Day. For He was himſelf, not only deſcended of the ſame Stock, but made choice of by the other Apoſtles to preſide over the firſt Chriſtian Church, collected in their ancient Capital City, *Jeruſalem*. And when Nature, and Character, and the Tenderneſs of a Charity reſulting from Both, had determined him to the Perſons; their preſent Sufferings pointed out the Subject proper, above all others, to begin his good Counſel with. He therefore immediately

immediately falls upon thoſe Sufferings, which the feeling of them to whom he wrote would naturally make uppermoſt in their Thoughts. He endeavours firſt of all, to inſtruct them in the Ends, the Advantages, and the proper Management of Afflictions. Thoſe more eſpecially, which God thinks fit to bring Men under, upon the Account of Truth and Religion.

Now, becauſe Theſe are ſpoken to at large, and all comprehended under the Title of Temptations; It may, I conceive, be both ſeaſonable and uſeful to take an Occaſion from hence of ſaying ſomewhat concerning the Nature of Temptations in general.

To *Tempt*, in the full Extent of the Word, is to *Try*. And, by Analogy, whatever is a Tryal of our Virtue may be called a Temptation. In this moſt comprehenſive Signification we may ſay, that every Circumſtance, every Event of Human Life, is a Temptation. Becauſe there is not any one of theſe, but, according as it falls under the principle of free Choice natural to Mankind, is capable of being uſed to right, or abuſed to wrong Purpoſes; and ſo, of becoming the Occaſion of our doing well, or ill, in the Management of it.

But, in regard Some of theſe require leſs Skill and Reſolution to manage them, than Others; And, ſince the Uſe proper to be made of them is ſo little diſagreeable to our Reaſon and Inclination, that they can hardly deſerve to be called Trials; Therefore that Name is generally confined to ſuch, as carry apparent Danger and Difficulty in them. Such, as offer Violence to Fleſh and Blood; and create great Struggles, between the Affections of Nature, and the Principles of Religion. Hence it comes to paſs, that great Afflictions, of any kind whatſoever, and eſpecially the Sufferings undergone for the ſake of God and a good Conſcience, are peculiarly diſtinguiſhed by the Title of Temptations.

In all theſe Caſes the Scripture acknowledges Temptations to come from God. Thus he is ſaid to tempt

Abraham,

Abraham, when commanding him to ſacrifice *Iſaac*: The Conflict, which muſt naturally riſe, bteween the natural Affection to a Son, the Son of his Old Age, his only Son, the Son of Promiſe, and the Conſideration of his Obedience due to that Command; being the moſt difficult Experiment of Faith in and Love to God, that perhaps was ever made. And conſequently, The Virtue of complying with it, in Deſpight of ſo much ſuggeſted for declining it, is the nobleſt Inſtance to be met with in Story. Thus again, The Temptations of Affliction and ſuffering in a good Cauſe are frequently attributed to God in Scripture; Even when moſt violent, and ſuch as the Weakneſs of Human Nature is apteſt to ſtartle at, and to ſhrink back from. This is plainly the Meaning of ſeveral Paſſages, which do not only mention God's trying Men in their Hearts; but intimate the ſevere Manner of doing it, by comparing the Afflictions themſelves to Fire, and the Perſons enduring them to Metals paſſing through, and ſeparated from their Droſs in, that Fire. Hence they are ſaid to be *tried*, to be *refined*, to be *melted* as *Silver and Gold*; and with regard to Perſecutions upon the Account of Religion in particular, The Tryal of Chriſtians is ſaid to be *much more precious than that of Silver and Gold, which periſheth, though it be tried by Fire*; and ſuch Sufferings are called a *fiery Tryal*, or according to the more Literal rendering, *a Fire kindled for their Temptation*. Now as God is ſaid expreſsly to be the Author of all theſe Temptations: ſo he ordains them for very wiſe and kind Reaſons, Of which I ſhall have Occaſion to take notice in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe.

Pſal. lxvi. 10. Zech. xiii. 9. Ezek. xxii. 20, 22.

1 Pet. i. 7.

Chap. iv. 12.

There is another ſort of Temptation, in the ſame Senſe of Trying; by which Men are ſaid to tempt God, when they adventure upon dangerous Experiments of his Power and Goodneſs. Such, as import either a wicked

wicked Diſtruſt of, or unwarrantable Preſumings upon, his Protection, and Care, or ſome of his Divine Perfections. So the *Iſraelites* tempted God in the Wilderneſs, when queſtioning his Ability to ſupply their Wants: And ſo our Saviour was urged to caſt himſelf *down from a Pinnacle of the Temple*, in Reliance upon a Promiſe of the Angels bearing him up. The Fallacy of which Reaſoning he refuted by that plain Command in the Law, *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Thus the Phariſees and Lawyers frequently *tempted* Chriſt, by demanding Signs which they thought above his Power; and by aſking enſnaring Queſtions, which they ſuppoſed would gravel him. And thus *Ananias* and *Sapphira* are ſaid to have *tempted the Spirit of the Lord* by lying to St. *Peter*; in Confidence, that their Fraud would paſs upon the Apoſtles; and that the Holy Ghoſt, wherewith They were inſpired, could not be conſcious of or diſcover their ſecret Colluſion. But this is an Application of the Word, no way belonging to the Place in Hand.

Pſal. lxxvii. 18. Numb. xi. 4. Exod. xvii. 4.

Matth. iv. 5, 6.

Ver. 7.

Matth. xvi. 1. —xix. 3. —xxii. 35. John viii. 6.

Acts v. 9.

Another more reſtrained Senſe of it there is, which imports ſeducing Men into Sin. Thus the Devil is moſt emphatically ſtyled the *Tempter*; As always lying in wait, and induſtriouſly ſuggeſting evil Thoughts: Either drawing us from good Purpoſes; or egging us on, and emboldening us in Wicked ones.

1 Theſſ. iii. 5. 1 Cor. vii. 5.

This ſort of Temptation is alſo aſcribed to the corrupt Inclinations of our own Hearts. Particularly in this Chapter: For here the Apoſtle declares, that it cannot without the utmoſt Injuſtice and Impiety be aſcribed to God, in that remarkable Text, *Ver.* 13. 14. *Let no Man, when he is tempted, ſay, I am tempted of God;*

God; for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.

The Truth is, in all Seducement the Tempter plays our own Artillery upon us. For Man, in his primitive Purity, was made capable of ſtanding or falling, by a limited Underſtanding poſſible to be impoſed upon, and by a Liberty of Will to chooſe, according to the true or falſe Appearances of Good. But by the Corruption which, ſince the Fall, Mankind lie under, theſe Faculties are miſerably weakened. The Underſtanding is clouded, the Will warped, and that Concupiſcence, which ſignifies a ſtrong Propenſion to Senſuality and Wickedneſs, is become a fit Matter for the ſubtle Enemy of Souls to work upon. By Theſe all the Evil Motions excited in us, find the Mind diſpoſed to receive and indulge them: and all the deluding Repreſentations put upon the things of the World, and the Appetites of Nature, are now much more apt to deceive us into a wrong Choice, and to draw us off from the true Principles of right Reaſon and Duty. When therefore a Man is tempted by his own *Luſt*, he is alſo tempted of the Devil; and when tempted of the Devil, he is tempted of his own *Luſt*. Becauſe the Corruption of our Nature, meant by that Word *Luſt*, is the Inſtrument the Devil makes uſe of; and it is our preſent Unhappineſs to have a falſe Party within, which holds Correſpondence with the Enemy, and furniſhes thoſe very Arms that he labours to ſlay us by. For, were it not for the Depravity of our ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions within, we ſhould find it much more eaſy to form right Judgments, and make wiſe Choices of things. And were it not for the Malice and Cunning of our Spiritual Adverſary without, who takes Advantage of theſe Diſorders, and Frailties of lapſed human Nature; the Affections of our own Breaſts, and the Appointments

of

of Providence concerning us, which in the Deſign of them are Temptations of Experiment only, would not, as now they ſo often do, prove Temptations of Seducement, in the Iſſue and unhappy Event of them.

Thus much, one would hope, might ſuffice to ſhew, how Men are ſaid in Scripture to be tempted of God; and how, of the Devil, and their own treacherous naughty Hearts. What thoſe Temptations are, which deſerve our Joy and Thanks; and what Thoſe, which it is our Duty with our utmoſt Might to ſtrive and pray againſt. But, as we daily imitate our firſt Parents in their Tranſgreſſion, ſo do we, in their Contrivances to cloak and excuſe it too. *Adam* endeavoured to mitigate his Guilt, by alledging, that a Woman given by God enticed him to it. Gen. iii. 12. His ſinful and no leſs blaſphemous Poſterity argue after the ſame manner: And can by no means think the Command of this Apoſtle reaſonable; but, endeavour to hide their Iniquity as *Adam*, by making God a Party in it too. Job xxxi. 33. A flaming, but it is much to be ſuſpected a common, Impiety: Frequent in the private Imaginations of many, who yet have the Modeſty not to eſpouſe and openly avow it. But Some have done even This, and produced what they eſteem their ſtrong Reaſons. Which I cannot but think it may be uſeful, *Firſt*, to propoſe; And *then* to offer ſuch Conſiderations in return to them, as may detect the Vanity of this Shift, and prevent the Wickedneſs of running to a Shelter, which, inſtead of a Covering, will prove our utter Confuſion.

Now upon this Occaſion, Some have had the Confidence to argue as follows. That, as to our Weakneſs and Corruption, God knows it perfectly; and how far we are from being an equal Match for the Enemy that attacks us. God declares in Scripture, that he hates Sin, that he tempts no Man to Sin, that

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he willeth not the Death of a Sinner. But does he not ſuffer Man to be tempted? Nay, Does he not ordain the very Temptations, that is to ſay, thoſe very Things and Events, which become Occaſions of Sin to them? And is not This to will their Death, and to deſtroy his Sheep, when he does not only not deſtroy the Wolf, but permits the Sheep to come daily and hourly in the Wolf's way? In a Word, If God do indeed hate Sin, why (ſay they) does he not prevent it effectually, by cutting off at once all thoſe Occaſions, from whence Sin comes?

Theſe are Pretences ſometimes laid hold on, to ſilence the Reproaches of a Guilty Conſcience, and to aſſuage the terrible Expectations of the Wrath to come. At other times inſultingly advanced, as Objections againſt the Divine Providence in general; Or at leaſt, as Difficulties, which bear very hard upon the Juſtice, and Holineſs, and Goodneſs of that Being, who is ſaid to govern the World in Methods of a Wiſdom tempered with, and inſeparable from, all theſe Perfections.

Now in anſwer hereunto, it is to be obſerved, that the Objectors agree with us in one general Principle. Which is, That it cannot by any Means conſiſt with the Notions we ought to entertain of God, to ſuppoſe, that a Being perfectly Good ſhould lead Men into inevitable Ruin; Or, that a Being perfectly Holy ſhould be Author of, or Partaker in, the Sins of Men; Or, that a Being perfectly Juſt ſhould puniſh Men for Facts by himſelf ordained, and, without any Seeking or Concurrence of their own, neceſſarily brought upon them. Thus much being premiſed, as out of the Queſtion; Let us ſee, how much the following Particulars will avail, toward ſatisfying all reaſonable Scruples about this Matter.

1. Firſt then, Let it be conſidered, Whether, when the ſeveral Beings in the Univerſe are created in excellent

cellent Order, and a gradual aſcent of Perfections; it can miſbecome their Creator to continue them in that Order. Now the Wiſdom of the Creator ſeems chiefly to be manifeſted, by the peculiar Excellencies of the ſeveral ſorts of Creatures: And the ſtanding Beauty of the Creation is illuſtrated, by Each ſort acting in Conſent and Proportion to their reſpective Powers and Qualifications. Among all the Stations, in thoſe regular Diſtances, none ſeems more wonderful, than that aſſigned to Man. He ſtands upon the Confines, and is the common Centre of Union as it were, between the Material and Spiritual World. Here is an incorruptible Soul inhabiting a Body corruptible; Conſequently fit to be acted upon by Paſſions and Appetites, and ſince tainted with Original Sin, whereby it is greatly depreſs'd toward Fleſh and Senſe. But, that Primitive Conſtitution and this ſupervening Corruption notwithſtanding, a Rational Soul it is; and, as ſuch, endued with a Power of thinking, comparing, judging, and determining its own Choice accordingly. We cannot ſay indeed, that, in theſe Operations, the Human Soul is ſo clear, or ſo equally poiſed, as formerly. But, that even the preſent Remains of this Freedom are an Excellence, cannot be deny'd. For Liberty is a Privilege, which all the World are fond of, and perpetually contending for. And thoſe Men know very little of the Dignity of Human Nature, who do not allow That of the Will to be the moſt valuable Liberty of any. Conſequently, it can be no Reflection upon God to preſerve Men in this Liberty; or to ſuffer the laying ſuch Objects before them, as in their preſent Station they may make an unwiſe Choice of: For this is the Condition of a Creature, frail and fallible, as well as free. But free his Will is, ſo as to be the proper Internal Principle of all his Actions. And if that Freedom be (as alas it is) too often employ'd amiſs; He, who gave the Privilege, ought not to be reproached

for

for the Abuſe of it. Leaſt of all, when not only every actual Abuſe of it, but every Habit or Diſpoſition in us tending that way, and all the unhappy Conſequences of Both, are owing to Man himſelf. On the other Hand; If theſe Bents and Warpings of the Will had deſtroyed all Freedom in us; What Trifling, what Mockery are thoſe Scriptures, which expoſtulate with Men, and aſk, *Why they will die*; Which call upon them, *to turn themſelves from their Iniquities*; Which declare wicked People to be *deſtroyed by the Perverſeneſs of their own Folly*; And, laſtly, Which beſpeak Men in ſuch ſolemn manner, *I call Heaven and Earth to record this Day againſt you, that I have ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing; therefore chooſe Life, that both Thou and thy Seed may live.*

Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.

Prov. xi. 3. — i. 31. 32.

Deut. xxx. 19.

2. The Laſt Particular vindicated the *Faculty* of the Will, let us in This look to the *Objects* of it. Which indeed are ſuch, that They, who are deſirous to have an effectual End put to all Vice, by God not ſuffering Men to be tempted; ſeem not to be ſufficiently aware, that the ſame Method would be every whit as effectual for putting an End to all Virtue too. For, to denominate any thing Virtuous, it is neceſſary, not only that there be a contrary Evil, but alſo, that the Evil have ſomething in it, which may invite us under the Appearance of ſome Good. Now That Appearance is the Mover of our Affections, and the very thing which makes the Temptation. For it is our Unhappineſs and our Fault, to be drawn by the Biaſs of Appetite and Senſe; And it is through Raſhneſs, or Prejudice, or Weakneſs in balancing of Motives, that we ſuffer the Deluſion of falſe Appearances to prevail, and prefer real Evil diſguiſed, before real Good. Now, the ſtronger thoſe Motives to Sin are, which we reſiſt; and the more reſolutely we perſevere in that Reſiſtance; the greater is

our Virtue and our Reward. And, if there were no Motives to be reſiſted; then doing well would not entitle us to Virtue or Reward either. If this be ſo; then our preſent Temptations, by furniſhing Opportunities for the exerciſe of our Virtue, do plainly add both to our preſent Commendation, and to our future Happineſs. Nay, and in proportion as the Temptation is ſharper and more difficult to be endured; the more valuable is the Victory, and the more joyful the Triumph. And, becauſe the expoſing ourſelves, and all that is dear to us, is a tryal, which Fleſh and Blood is of all others moſt apt to boggle and recoil at; the Apoſtle does here repreſent the Caſe of ſuffering for Chriſt and his Religion, as ſuch a one. And, not content with patiently enduring, he commands his afflicted Countrymen even to rejoice in ſuch trying Circumſtances; upon account of that glorious and beneficial Diſtinction, which unſhaken Courage and Conſtancy would make for them here; and of the abundant Recompence, which would be thus ſecured to them hereafter. *Ver.* 2, 3, 4, 12.

3. But, *Thirdly*, As oft as the Subject now under debate comes into our minds, Let us be ſure to take this along with us; that the Objects without the Solicitations from within, and the Suggeſtions of our great Enemy working upon both, when conſidered all together, are yet *but* Temptations. That is, They try us only, but they cannot ſo force us, as that any Man ſhould periſh without his own conſent. In a word, Temptations are not properly the Cauſes, but merely the Occaſions and Inſtruments of Sin. And even then, they are not ſuch by any Natural Tendency of their own; but altogether made ſuch by our Neglect or Miſmanagement. Can any thing be plainer than this is made, by the different Effects and Conſequences of the Diſpenſations of Providence, as they happen to be the Portion of different Men? The Afflictions ſent by

God, Do not they aggravate the Guilt of Some, by provoking Impatience and Rage, Murmuring and Deſpair? And yet the very ſame Afflictions brighten the Virtue of Others; and, by the exerciſe of Patience and Meekneſs, Faith and Heavenly-mindedneſs, draw their Souls cloſer, and render them dearer to God. The Riches God beſtows, Are they not to one Man, like *the Camel* to the *Needle*'s *Eye*; an Obſtruction to his Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven? And yet even Theſe promote the Salvation of Others, who *make to themſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs*, and open a more abundant Paſſage into *Everlaſting Habitations*. Theſe are Caſes obvious to every Man's Senſes and Experience. And Reaſon will prove as evidently in all the kinds and degrees of them, that Temptations do nothing of themſelves: That the Reſult and Iſſue depends conſtantly upon the Perſon try'd by them: And, that ſuch Iſſue will be prejudicial or profitable, not according to the Quality or the Degree of the Tryal, but according to the Hand it ſhall fall into, and the Uſes which ſhall be made of it.

Luke xvi. 9.

4. I would not be ſuppoſed all this while to forget the deplorable Impotence of Human Nature; and that unhappy Bent of Paſſion and Inclination, which, like a Biaſs put the wrong way, draws us much more ſtrongly to Evil than Good. But, bleſſed be God, we can add in the *Laſt* Place, that there is a Proviſion made for This alſo, by the Aſſiſtances of that Grace, which is promiſed to all our Weakneſſes and Wants; upon Condition it be earneſtly ſought, and diligently improved. So that when He, who ſays,

John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing*; hath likewiſe ſaid, *Ask and ye ſhall receive*; And,

Matth. vii. 7.

John vi. 37. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out*; And, *To Him that hath ſhall be*

Matth. xxv. 29. *given, and he ſhall have Abundance*; And,

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My Grace is ſufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakneſs; and, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee*: 2 Cor. xii. 9. Heb. xiii. 5.
When the ſame Apoſtle, who acknowledges that he was not *ſufficient of himſelf to think any thing as of himſelf*: does yet at another time declare himſelf *able to do even all things through Chriſt, who ſtrengthens him*; 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. iv. 13.
and lays this down, as a Rule, that obtains in all God's Proceedings, and as an Evidence of the *Faithfulneſs*, from which he can never depart; that he *will not ſuffer* his Servants *to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it*: 1 Cor. x. 13.
When ſuch Scriptures as Theſe, I ſay, come to be fairly weighed, they are great and gracious Supports. Enough to buoy up the ſinking Spirits of any true Chriſtian under the ſevereſt Tryals: Enough to convince any impartial Conſiderer, that God, who gave Men a Power of Choice, is wiſe and good in leaving them to the uſe of it: That He, who makes Temptations capable of contributing to their Virtue and Happineſs, no leſs than to their Guilt and Miſery, is by no means chargeable with their Sins: And that He, who forſakes not the Faithful, nor ever fails to ſuſtain the Weak, does all that can become Him to do with Creatures, ſo created at firſt, and ſo corrupted at preſent, as Mankind are. Creatures, not ſuppoſed to have ſufficient Powers of their own; and therefore directed here by St. *James*, upon a certain Preſumption of their Wants, from whence, and upon what Terms, to expect Supplies. For that is manifeſtly his Meaning from the *fourth* to the *ninth* Verſe. Which I ſhall explain as briefly as I can, by enquiring, Into the Nature of the Thing he commands his afflicted Brethren to pray for; and then, Into the Qualification he requires, for rendering thoſe Prayers ſucceſsful.

The Bleſſing to be prayed for is *Wiſdom*. Under which we may reaſonably ſuppoſe all that Ability of doing well to be comprehended, which is more commonly ſtyled the Grace, or Spirit, of God. For, in regard the Will and Underſtanding are only diſtinct Operations of One and the ſame Mind; and whatſoever the Underſtanding conceives and repreſents as beſt, the Will never fails to chooſe; It follows, that a true Information of the Judgment is not only an effectual Security, but even a neceſſary Cauſe, of a right Determination of the Will. Provided always, that by ſuch Information be meant, not only a cold and ſpeculative Notion of the Truth and Nature of Things; but a lively Senſe, and juſt Calculation, of their Importance and reſpective Conſequences to us. For, as no Man in his Wits ever choſe Evil, except under the Notion of Good; So neither did any ever chooſe it, except under the Notion of a Good, greater, as was at that Inſtant preſumed, than ſome Other Good, then laid in the Balance againſt it.

The Motives, or ſeveral ſorts of Good, concerned in Moral Actions, are reducible to Three Heads; The Virtue or Honeſty, The Profit, and The Pleaſure of them. The more of theſe concur, the ſtronger is the Inducement. But the Firſt is of ſo great Conſideration, that Both the other are not an equivalent, nor ought to prevail without it, much leſs againſt it: That is, No Proſpect of Pleaſure or Advantage will juſtify an Action vicious and infamous. Now, in regard thoſe Advantages and Pleaſures are alſo of different kinds; it requires great Skill and Integrity to make a juſt Computation and Choice between them: To give a due Preference, as the Profit happens to be greater or leſs, preſent or future; And as the Pleaſure propoſed is durable and fugitive, intellectual or ſenſual. In the preſent depraved State of Human Nature, the Laſt of theſe Motives ſeems moſt powerfully to affect us. And of

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Them again ſuch Pleaſures, as moſt gratify Senſe, and cannot be of any long Continuance. The only Method therefore of ſecuring ourſelves from the Danger of being deluded by Theſe, is to weigh againſt them the Virtue, the Advantage, and the Delights of another kind, which attend things unacceptable to Fleſh and Blood. But, This being all a Violence to our corrupt Inclinations, we muſt be obliged to a Principle ſuperior to Nature for our Succeſs in attempting it. Eſpecially in Afflictions, which, the Apoſtle truly confeſſes, do *ſeem for the preſent not only not joyous, but grievous.* And more particularly yet Heb. xii. 11. in thoſe, which are voluntary Afflictions, and choſen for the ſake of God and Religion, (the Caſe of the Converts here applied to by St. *James*) no *Wiſdom* leſs than That from above, can produce and eſtabliſh Reſolution and Perſeverance in Sufferings, to which Mankind have the ſtrongeſt and moſt irreconcileable Averſions. This therefore is the Mercy, which They, and all afflicted Chriſtians, are encouraged to aſk of God. And the mighty Influence and Benefit of it, under ſuch trying Circumſtances, may be expected to anſwer our Purpoſes and Wants, the ſeveral Ways that follow.

1. In enlightning the Minds of Men, to ſee and attend to the many excellent Reaſons, which move God to ordain or permit ſuch Afflictions upon his Servants. Such are, The Tryal of their Virtue; As the beſt tempered Arms are proved by a Higher Charge than ordinary: The Increaſe of their Spiritual Strength; Exerciſe contributing to that of the Mind, no leſs than that of the Body: The Prevention of Spiritual Pride, and Security: by ſuch Experiments of their own Weakneſs if left to themſelves; and of their ſtill remaining liable to Temptation, notwithſtanding any Attainments in Grace and Virtue made by them, though never ſo happily heretofore: The correcting ſome paſt Miſdemeanour, or ſubduing ſome rebellious Luſts, which often-

times make Inſurrection, and interrupt the Piety even of very Good Men: Magnifying the Power of Divine Grace, in carrying them through Difficulties, which Human Nature, deſtitute of ſuch Aſſiſtances, had not been able to bear up againſt: Shewing to the World Examples of ſurpriſing Patience, Reſolution, and Firmneſs of Mind, to provoke their Imitation, and encourage the honeſt but feeble Intentions of Others: Weaning the Affections from things here below: Raiſing the Mind by heavenly Diſpoſitions, and, in proportion to their preſent Sufferings, perſuading them of a ſure and more abundant Recompence, for the Crown of their Labours at the laſt Great Day.

Theſe are ſome of the many excellent Ends, ſerved by the Sufferings of Good Men. Which yet are all overlook'd or forgotten, unleſs repreſented faithfully to the Mind by a Wiſdom inſpired from above. To This we owe the very Remembrance, To this the juſt Valuation of them. This teaches us the Reaſonableneſs of glorifying God, in any way of his own chooſing; The Preference due to Profit above Pleaſure; And how much better it is for us, that our Minds ſhould be improved, than that our Senſes ſhould be gratifyed. This takes off from the preſent Smart by the feeling of God's Favour; And more than makes amends for bodily Pain and Grief, by the raviſhing Satisfactions of a good Conſcience. But eſpecially This ſets the Excellency of our Reward always in view, and the unſpeakable Kindneſs of that Father, by whoſe infinitely wiſe Providence the *light Affliction for a Moment* is ſo ordered, as to *work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

2 Cor. iv. 17.

2. The Wiſdom mentioned here is yet farther uſeful, by diſcovering to us the Ends aimed at in our own particular Afflictions, and the Means beſt fitted for attaining thoſe Ends. The former Obſervation propounded only the Ends of Affliction in general; which

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are ſerved, not All at once, but Some in one time and Perſon, Some in another, as Circumſtances differ, and Occaſions require. In this Variety therefore of good Uſes, it is of the utmoſt Importance rightly to underſtand, Which ſhould be chiefly applied, and What ſort of Account God expects from each Diſpenſation of his Providence toward our own ſelves. In this Diſquiſition, the State of our Souls, and the Nature and Kind of our Affliction, are principal Articles. Theſe when the Grace of God hath helped us to deſcry, (as, Whether our Sufferings be deſigned for Correction of ſome Vice, Or whether for the Exerciſe and Exemplification of ſome Virtue, and the like) the next Proof of our Spiritual Skill muſt be ſeen in ſuch a Temper and Behaviour, as may anſwer that purpoſe of God concerning us. If this be to chaſtiſe us, Repentance muſt be our Care; If to try us, Patience and Perſeverance; If to promote the Honour of Religion, Meekneſs and Charity to our Perſecutors; And a Deportment ſo diſcreet and void of Offence, as may oblige thoſe of a contrary Judgment to glorify God, by the good Works they ſhall behold in Us. In ſhort, This will be a Light to our Eyes, and a Guide to our Feet. A Wiſdom to Salvation, by which we ſhall at once be enabled to know, and to practiſe our Duty; to bring forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, and to bear each Fruit in its proper Kind and Seaſon. Particularly, In Sufferings for the ſake of Religion, (which is the Caſe before us, and ſeems the moſt difficult of any) this Heavenly Wiſdom is abſolutely neceſſary, to diſtinguiſh the Cauſes and proper Times of ſuffering. What thoſe are, which require our enduring and reſiſting even unto Blood; and, When the Serpent ought to be mixt with the Dove, by prudently declining a needleſs Tryal: What Means are fit to be uſed for our own Preſervation; which, if neglected, our pretended Martyrdom would be the Sacrifice of Fools: And, when it is, that we are to caſt our ſelves entirely upon Providence,

and eſteem the very ſoreſt Temptations juſt Matter of Joy to us.

Such is the Grace, which St. *James* here would have his perſecuted Brethren, and indeed the Afflicted in general, to aſk of God. And ſo properly it is ſtyled Wiſdom: As a Principle, both convincing their Judgments of the wiſe and kind Ends, and conducting them in the uſe of Means moſt ſuitable to the Ends of their reſpective Tryals. It remains now, only that I ſay ſomewhat to the Other Point; which concerns the Qualification requiſite to render the Prayers of this Wiſdom ſucceſsful: And That ſhall be done very briefly.

Among the Promiſes of Grace produced at the Entrance upon this Head, the *Firſt* enjoins *aſking*, as a neceſſary Preliminary to *Receiving*. Now this *aſking* the Apoſtle tells us here muſt be in *Faith*, without *doubting* and *wavering*, and a *Double Mind*. Whereby, there is no Queſtion, but the Two following Particulars are intended.

1. *Firſt*, A ſtedfaſt Reliance upon God for obtaining ſuch Succour and Relief (that is, ſuch Meaſures of his Grace and Favour) as he ſees expedient for us. It is plain from infinite Paſſages of Holy Writ, that God expects we ſhould apply to him in our Wants, and that we ſhould do it with repeated and continued Earneſtneſs. But then it is equally plain to any who conſider thoſe Paſſages, that our Importunity is acceptable and prevalent with God, as it is a Teſtimony of our unſhaken Faith in, and humble Dependence upon him: In a word, that it does not extort the Mercy he is loth to grant, but makes us fit to receive the Bleſſings he delights liberally to beſtow. Accordingly, where the Deliverance of his Servants, and the granting of their Prayers, are mentioned; we find them generally attributed to their *Hope* and *Truſt*, their *Waiting for*, and *Caſting their Burden upon*

Pſal. xxxiii. 10. — xxxii. 20. 21.

upon God. For this indeed is giving him the Glory due to his Divine Perfections. — lv. 22. Iſa. xxvi. 3, 4. We muſt not imagine any Difficulties too great for Him to vaniſh; for that detracts from his Omnipotence: We muſt not ſuppoſe our own Faults and Frailties (when unaffected and repented of) will ſhut his Ears againſt our Cries; for that were a Diſparagement to his Mercy and his Truth. Leaſt of all muſt we come to him with any Confidence in ourſelves; for that were to make our Prayers a Mockery, and preſume to divide the Honour of our Succeſs with him. And, whatever our own Endeavours may be, (and they ought to be what they can) yet the Events, nay the very Power of endeavouring, muſt be acknowledged entirely His. To be ſhort, He is to be our ſole Stay and Truſt; and upon Him we are to reſt with a Firmneſs, which may compoſe our Fears, prevent all Anxiety of Thought, ſet us above all Deſpondencies, poſſeſs us with an impregnable Perſuaſion of his Affection for us: Such Laſtly, as may repreſent the Aids, which we implore with a due Reſignation of our Spirits to his Heavenly Will and Wiſdom, (all that we really ſtand in need of) to be as certain to us, as if we already had them in actual Poſſeſſion.

2. The Other thing intended here, is Steadineſs in our Duty. A well-weighed and fixed Reſolution, that no Extremities ſhall drive us to Deſpair, nor abate of our Love and Zeal: A prudent Uſe of the Means put into our Hands; without which we do not ſo properly truſt God, as tempt him: And an utter Abhorrence of all unlawful Means for our Eaſe and Reſcue. For, by recourſe to ſuch, we plainly break off with God, take the Matter out of his hands, give up his Protection, and formally diſcharge his Providence from any further Care of us. To this purpoſe a very ancient Writer of the Church interprets the *double Mind* here, of a Man divided in his Affections between This and

and the Next World: Floating like a Veſſel without Ballaſt, with Wind and Tide contrary. Such is the Inſtability ſpoken of at the *Eighth* Verſe, where Conſcience of Duty, Fear of Puniſhment, and Hope of Heaven draw One way; and a violent Guſt of Trouble, and Worldly Conſiderations, drive Another. And, according as either of theſe oppoſite Motives make a ſtronger or weaker Impreſſion, the Man's Piety and Virtue are proportionably more intenſe or remiſs. Now ſuch a Man cannot, as St. *James* obſerves, *think* (or reaſonably expect) to *receive any thing* (any of this Wiſdom) *from God*; becauſe he is defective in the very Condition, upon which it is promiſed. Sincerity and Conſtancy are Our part; but theſe belong to none, *whoſe Hearts are not whole with God, and who continue not ſtedfaſt in his Covenant*. His Honour and his Truth ſtand unalterably engaged, in Favour of thoſe brave Soldiers of Chriſt, who in this Fight of Afflictions ſtrive Lawfully and Manfully: But They have no Right to either Deliverance or Support, who, though content to march under his Banner while the Service is eaſy, do yet, when Combat comes on, and the Action grows hot, throw down their Arms and deſert to the Enemy. The Chriſtian Warfare is ſuch as allows of no Capitulation. For, as the Cauſe is God's, ſo is the Strength that defends it. And, Is it to be imagined, that a formal Petition ſhould prevail for additional Recruits, to Them who have betrayed the Supplies they received before? If therefore we deſire, God ſhould ſtrengthen our Weakneſs; we muſt determine to employ the Courage and Powers he inſpires. We muſt, in full Aſſurance of his Might, reſolve to ſtand it out to the laſt; which is indeed reſolving to conquer and triumph.

2 Tim. ii. 13. For *He is faithful, he cannot deny himſelf*; and They, who call in his Succours againſt any ſort of Tribulations or Tryals, with the Two Diſpoſitions I have been treating of, never yet did, never ſhall, ſeek them in vain.

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I own, there are many Caſes, from whence unwary People might be apt to conclude, that even Such Prayers are not effectually heard. But I muſt add, that many Prayers are then moſt effectually heard, when ſuch Men fondly ſuſpect the quite contrary. For the Minds ſo prepared, as we have juſt now ſeen, always eſteem their Addreſſes moſt ſucceſsful, when anſwered in that way, which the Divine Wiſdom knows to be beſt for them. Not always by Deliverance out of Afflictions; becauſe the Continuance of theſe may be more for the Glory of God, and their own Good. Suppoſing then, that theſe be even lengthened; they are heard, if their own Patience be lengthened out with them. Suppoſe the Degree of them to be yet more exquiſite; they are heard if the Meaſures of their Spiritual Conſolation and Support do at the ſame time increaſe. Nay, ſuppoſing the Extremity to be ſuch, as even foils theſe Combatants for a Seaſon; Yet, notwithſtanding ſuch Diſgrace, they are heard, if God renew their Strength, pour in more plentiful Reliefs of Grace, and ſo bring Good out of Evil, that they grow wiſe and wary by paſt Dangers, and not only recover their Standing, but even profit themſelves of their Fall. For it is an indiſpenſable part of our Duty chearfully to ſubmit to the Divine Wiſdom, both for the Duration and the Degree of our Tryals; and firmly to depend upon it for ſuch a final Iſſue, as ſhall not fail at laſt to be moſt for our Advantage. And therefore, if theſe Petitioners ſhall be oppreſs'd, tormented, and barbarouſly ſlain in a good Cauſe; yet even then they are heard too. Then, in the moſt beneficial Senſe of all; For *Bleſſed* above all others *is the Man* that thus *endureth Temptation*, becauſe ſure to *receive the Crown of Life*, *which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.* *Ver.* 12. And a Crown of more than common Weight and Luſtre, no doubt, is laid up for thoſe, who give this laſt Proof of their Fidelity and Love to Him.

The

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

John xiv. 1.

1. Be not discouraged at my Departure, or the Troubles consequent upon it: But support your Hearts with Faith in the Father, and in Me, who am One with the Father, and consequently able to defend you in the Execution of my Commands.

1. *AND Jesus said unto his Disciples, Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

2. Able also to reward you with durable and abundant Happiness in Heaven.

2. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.*

3. Whither one purpose of my returning is, to gain access for You: And accordingly I will in due time come back from thence again, and receive you up thither, to dwell with me for ever.

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

4. That this is the place to which I am going, you have been often told; and so you have likewise, of the Way that leads thither; so that you need not any Enlargement on these Points.

4. *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye knew.*

5. *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

6. I am the Guide and Director, and so the Way; I am the Teacher of the Truth, revealed for this purpose, and so the Truth; I am the Author and only Source of Happiness Eternal, and so the Life; To the Enjoyment whereof with my Father no Man can attain, except by obeying and relying upon Me, in these several Capacities.

6. *Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto my Father but by Me.*

7. Do not therefore complain, that you know not the Father to whom I am going: For They who know me and my Doctrine, know Him; and They who see my Miracles and me, see Him.

7. *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

8. *Philip*, conceiving grosly of this Sight, and alluding possibly to some Manifestations, which God was pleased to make of himself to *Moses*, *Elias*, and the like, desires some sensible Representation of the Father.

8. *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

9.

9. *Jeſus ſaith unto him, Have I been ſo long time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me, Philip? He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father? and how ſayeſt thou then, Shew us the Father?*

9. This Requeſt our Lord reproves, by anſwering, that the bodily ſight of Him had not fully acquainted *Philip* with him. For to diſcern nothing more than Human in the Son was not to know the Son; And to deſcry the Divine Perfections under that Veil of Humanity, was to ſee the Father in the Son:

10. *Believeſt thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I ſpeak unto you, I ſpeak not of myſelf: but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doth the works.*
11. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or elſe believe me for the very works ſake.*

10, 11. Theſe two being One in Subſtance, and mutually in each other, as Original and Image: And in this reſpect, Neither of them an Object of bodily ſight: They are ſeen by the Mind contemplating their Divine Perfections; Such were the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Truth of the Father, in the Son's Doctrine; and the Power of the Father in the Son's Miracles. The Union in this latter reſpect being a ſenſible Demonſtration of their Union in the reſt.

12. *Verily, Verily, I ſay unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, ſhall he do alſo: and greater works than theſe ſhall he do: becauſe I go unto my Father.*

12. As a farther Evidence whereof, and that he was to be exalted, not deſtroyed, by dying; Chriſt promiſes to impart his Power to theſe Diſciples ſo effectually, that the Operations of it in Their hands ſhould be more amazing, than even thoſe of it in his own had been.

13. *And whatſoever ye ſhall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

13. Nothing, which they ſhould attempt in the Execution of their Miniſtry, with the Invocation of his Name, and Interpoſition of his Power, ſhould be inſuperable to them. By which means the Chriſtian Religion ſhould be promoted, and ſo bring Honour to the Father, in the manner he chooſes to be ſerved and glorified by.

14. *If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it.*

14. And to remove all doubt of my Power (ſays Chriſt) I once more promiſe, that I will do this for you.

COMMENT.

IN the Epiſtle, One of our Lord's Apoſtles directs and comforts his ſuffering Fellow-Chriſtians under the preſent feeling and ſmart of Temptations; In the Goſpel for this Feſtival, our Lord himſelf comforts That, and the reſt of his Brethren the Apoſtles, under

der the melancholy Proſpect of them. The Arguments for their Support are the ſame in ſubſtance; as the Troubles they were to be ſuſtained under are the ſame in kind: Such Difficulties principally, as the Preaching or Profeſſion of the Goſpel ſhould expoſe them to. But, as the Afflictions of good Men in general are an Object of the Divine Mercy, and entitle the patient Sufferers to the Aſſiſtances of Grace at preſent, and a glorious Recompence hereafter: So are We allowed, under due Limitations, to apply theſe Promiſes proportionably to the Pains and Patience of all Chriſt's faithful Servants, how different ſoever in other reſpects their Capacities and Sufferings may happen to be.

Our Lord had ſaid in the Chapter be-
Ch. xiii. 36. fore, that, to the place whither he was then going, St. *Peter* could not *follow him* immediately, but he ſhould *follow him afterwards*. The ſame Comfort is here extended to the reſt of the Apoſtles; who indeed were appointed to follow him, in the ſame way of Torments and Death for the Truth's ſake. And the Terms of this Conſolation juſtify the Hopes of all others, who follow him in Meekneſs and Conſtancy, Integrity and Piety, though not in the like painful ſteps of dying for the Teſtimony of the ſame Truth.

The Excellence of the Reward provided for all ſuch, is illuſtrated in Three Particulars. (1.) The Durableneſs of it, intimated by the Word *Manſions*. Places of Abode; oppoſed to that uncertain Condition of things
Heb. xiii. 14. below, repreſented elſewhere by our *having here no continuing City*. (2.) The abundance of that Proviſion: for thoſe Manſions are *many*, and furniſh room for all, who make it their care to ſeek and to be qualified for them; be the number of ſuch never ſo great. (3.) The Exquiſiteneſs of the Felicity, which ſhall be then attained: In regard theſe Manſions are in *Chriſt's Father's Houſe*; where all Happineſs and Perfection dwells. For in God's

God's *Preſence is fulneſs of Joy, and at his right hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.* Pſal. xvi. 12.

From hence our Bleſſed Saviour proceeds to ſhew, that the glorious Object of this Hope is entirely owing to him. This Diſcourſe is occaſioned by the groſs Apprehenſions of two Apoſtles; Whoſe ſlowneſs of Underſtanding turned to our profit, by opening the way to a full Declaration of our Lord's eſſential Unity with God the Father; and to moſt expreſs Aſſertions of his power and readineſs effectually to anſwer the Requeſts put up in his Name, by plentiful Supplies of all neceſſary Aſſiſtances and Graces of the Holy Spirit.

That this Promiſe was literally and primarily intended and made good to the Apoſtles, by the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Holy Ghoſt, imparted to them at the Day of Pentecoſt, and at other times afterwards, as their Circumſtances required, is not to be denied. But there are other Gifts of that Spirit, and ſeveral Bleſſings no leſs requiſite, for the ordinary Conduct of our Actions, for the Honour of God and Religion, and for the leading Men in all Ages to the ſame bliſsful Manſions. Theſe alſo are ſuch, as muſt be ſought after the ſame manner, and expected on Prayers alike condition'd. And therefore, to render this Scripture of as general Uſe and Conſolation, as the Words of it will in their utmoſt Latitude import; I ſhall conſider the Two laſt Verſes of the Goſpel, with relation to the Prayers of good Men at large. And, having treated formerly of ſundry points, wherein this Subject is concerned; I will employ my Reader's Thoughts on One, purpoſely reſerved for the preſent Occaſion. That, I mean, which is here enjoyned, as a Condition neceſſary to qualify all our Prayers for Succeſs, which is *asking in the Name of Chriſt.*

Now a thing is ſaid in Scripture to be done in the Name of another, Four ſeveral ways. Either (1.) When it

it is done at the Command of and by Commiſſion from another. Or (2.) When Men act or do it for the Service and Honour of another. Or (3.) When they proceed in Conformity to the Rules and Directions ſet by that other. Or (4.) When they interpoſe the Authority and Mediation, the Sake and Merits, of another.

In theſe ſeveral Senſes Chriſt is ſaid to [a] *come*, and to [b] *act* in his *Father's Name*; The [c] *Prophets*, to *ſpeak* in *God*'s, and the [d] *Apoſtles* in *Chriſt's Name*; And *Men to* [e] *hazard their Lives*, and to [f] *ſuffer Reproach for his Name*; and to [g] *do Wonders*; nay, to *do* [h] *all things in his Name*. And, in the laſt of theſe Significations, we read of *being* [i] *juſtified*, [k] *receiving Remiſſion of Sins*, [l] *having Life*, and [m] *giving Thanks to God, in his Name*.

a John v. 43.
b — x. 25.
c Exod. v. 23. Deut. xviii. 19, 20.
d Acts iv. 17, 18. — v. 40.
e Acts xv. 26.
f — v. 41. 1 Pet. iv. 14.
g Acts v. 30.
h Col. iii. 17.
i 1 Cor. vi. 11.
k Acts x. 43.
l John xx. 31.
m Eph. v. 20.

1. In the Firſt of theſe Senſes Men may be ſaid to aſk in *Chriſt's Name*, when they come to God, in Obedience to Chriſt's Command, and from a Senſe that it is their Duty ſo to do. So did the Apoſtles, when, in a juſt Diffidence of any Power or Holineſs of their own, they implored Supernatural Abilities, proper for the efficacious Diſcharge of a Truſt by Him committed to them. So *David* deſcribes his own Practice, and the Foundation of it, *Pſal.* xxvii. 8. *When thou ſaidſt unto me, Seek my Face; my Heart ſaid, Thy Face, Lord, will I ſeek.* And This ought indeed to be the Senſe of us all, at every Approach toward the Throne of Grace. For a very little Reflection upon the infinite Majeſty of God, and the wretched Vileneſs of ſuch Creatures as We are, would ſuffice to condemn the offering at any ſort of Correſpondence with a Deity ſo pure, ſo high, of Arrogance and Preſumption. Some Warrant therefore was neceſſary to countenance and juſtify thoſe Addreſſes, the Boldneſs whereof, without ſuch Encouragement, would be unſeemly

ſeemly and inexcuſable. But when our Gracious Lord hath condeſcended not only to allow, but with all imaginable Kindneſs to invite, nay with the moſt peremptory Injunctions to require, our frequent and conſtant Applications: When he hath called us, and directed us to come with all the modeſt Aſſurance and dutiful Importunity, uſual in the Requeſts of Children to a Father, or of one dear and intimate Friend to another; What can be alledged in Extenuation of Their Fault, who ſhew themſelves inſenſible of ſuch a Mercy, ſuch a Privilege? And how ſhall They eſcape, who neglect to uſe the one, and thruſt the other away from them? How can Men look upon Prayer, as a Matter of no Conſequence; ſuch as may be performed or let alone at Pleaſure; ſuch as God neither needs, nor will be moved by: In ſhort, as a Homage, if it be a fit one, by which no Honour, no Advantage accrues to the Party paying, but all to the Perſon receiving it? When Irreligion and Profaneneſs ſhall obtrude ſuch Notions as Theſe; And when the too general diſuſe of Prayer ſeems to ſay, they are too greedily imbibed: It is highly requiſite, Men ſhould be told, that Duty as well as Intereſt hath a part in this Matter; that Men ſhould pray, in an Apprehenſion of their being bound to do ſo. And therefore They that *aſk in Chriſt's Name*, muſt firſt of all acknowledge Chriſt's Authority. They muſt proceed, I mean, upon a Principle of Conſcience, as performing a Service, and an Inſtance of Homage. A Service, owing from a dependent Creature to an Infinite and Almighty Creator: And encouraged by poſitive Commands and affectionate Exhortations. Theſe ought always to weigh very much with a Diſciple, when ſo often and ſo earneſtly inculcated, by ſo Great, ſo Gracious a Maſter. And that, in ſo kind a Manner, as well as with ſo juſt Authority, that none would, none in reaſon can, think himſelf at Liberty to diſpute or diſpenſe with the Command. Let

This then be our First Care, This our First Mark of *asking in Christ's Name*; that we pray in due Deference to his Order, in Confidence of the Encouragement given by Him; and *ask*, becauſe, as his Servants and Followers, we find ourſelves under indiſpenſable Obligations; ſuch as render us guilty of a very great Sin, ſhould we neglect *asking*.

2. This Direction of *asking in Christ's Name* may be alſo interpreted ſo, as to concern the Ends propoſed to ourſelves; and to regulate our Deſires, and our Uſe, of the things we pray for. An Interpretation, judged by ſome the moſt genuine of any: Who have therefore choſen to read the Words, at *Ver.* 13. in the following Order, *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my Name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, that will I do.* This was manifeſtly the Caſe more immediately concerned here. Thoſe Apoſtles did not aſk a Power of working Miracles, out of any vain Oſtentation, or for private Advantage to themſelves; But purely for the Promotion of the Goſpel which required ſuch Teſtimonies, and by which, above any other Inſtance, the Father was glorified in the Succeſs of his Son's Doctrine and Kingdom. And St. *Chryſoſtom*, in like manner, underſtands the Promiſe of our Bleſſed Lord's Preſence, *where two or three are gathered together in his Name*, to mean ſuch Aſſemblies for promoting mutual Peace and Love, as make Chriſt the Motive and true Foundation of Charity to their Neighbour. However that be, as to the proper Senſe of that Paſſage in particular; Yet certain it is in general, that every good and faithful Servant makes his Maſter's Advantage the principal End of his Actions. Our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, upon all Occaſions, vindicates his own Fidelity from hence, that he was far from purſuing any ſeparate Intereſts of his own, but in all things ſought the Honour of his Father that ſent him. And thus it becomes every Man, who profeſſes himſelf a Servant and Follower of Chriſt, to do; To fix

fix his Hopes and Wiſhes chiefly upon thoſe things, which conduce moſt to the promoting his Maſter's Honour, and the Advancement of that Spiritual Kingdom of Grace and Glory, which he came to ſet up; To ſet it up, in the Hearts of Men at preſent, by Faith and Virtue; and then, in the Happineſs and Salvation of Souls hereafter. We muſt therefore prefer This before any Private or Temporal Reſpects, and fix our laſt and great Aim in the Increaſe of our Lord's Honour. So that no Chriſtian, in this Senſe, *aſks in Chriſt's Name*, who does not allow to the Spiritual and Eternal Benefits to be obtained from Him, that Place in his Heart, which is really due to them. That is, Who does not eſteem the Future infinitely more deſireable, than any Advantages which can be enjoyed in the Preſent World: And deſire thoſe proper to the Soul, above any Pleaſures or Advantages that can poſſibly accrue to his outward and mortal part. Nay who, with regard to theſe ſenſible and bodily Advantages, does not bring a Spirit ſo perfectly reſigned; as to be well content, that his Prayers relating to Theſe, ſhould be heard and anſwered in ſuch a manner, as God in his Wiſdom ſhall ſee moſt fit; though at the ſame time that may ſo happen, as not to be moſt agreeable to the Inclinations of Fleſh and Senſe, and a merely Natural Man.

3. They who *aſk in Chriſt's Name*, are ſuppoſed to contribute their own Endeavours, ſo far as theſe can be ſerviceable, to the obtaining what they aſk. For (as I ſaid before) to do any thing in the Name of Another, implies the doing it by his Order and Direction. We are therefore commanded to *aſk in Faith*; becauſe Faith ſuppoſes a Promiſe and a Declaration, as the proper Baſis on which it ſtands. Conſequently, it does not, cannot exclude, but muſt indeed of neceſſity infer, the Performance of all thoſe Conditions, upon which the Promiſe is ſuſpended. For Example: We are commanded to aſk our *daily Bread*; but we are

commanded to ſeek it by honeſt Labour too. And therefore the praying for it implies no more, than begging Succeſs upon our Labours, and the Bleſſing of God to proſper and reward our Induſtry. We are encouraged to aſk Forgiveneſs of our Sins, and emboldned to depend upon the Mercy of God, and the Sufferings of Chriſt for it: But we are ordered likewiſe to repent of our Sins, and to forſake them. And therefore He, who prays, and expects to be pardoned, and ſtill continues obdurate and unreformed, hath no juſt Foundation for his Requeſts or his Hopes: Nor can he be ſaid to *aſk in Chriſt's Name*, becauſe he does not aſk in ſuch a Manner, and upon ſuch Terms, as Chriſt hath appointed. *If I incline to Wickedneſs with my Heart, the Lord will not hear me*, ſays *David*. And therefore obſtinately wicked Men do not aſk in Chriſt's Name when they pray: becauſe ſuch a Courſe of Life is neither conſiſtent with true Faith in Him, as a Mediator; nor with the Conditions of being heard and accepted by Virtue of that Mediation. In all ſuch Caſes, Men do but tempt God, and mock Themſelves; by forming new Conditions, exceeding their Commiſſion, and abuſing the Privilege of Acceſs to Him. They turn That, which was intended as an Encouragement and Aſſiſtance to their own Care, into a Pretence of Hypocriſy and Sloth. We cannot command Events nor render our own Endeavours ſucceſsful; and therefore God hath permitted, nay he hath enjoyned, the recommending our Selves and our Endeavours to Him. But That, which is a Supply to our Defects and Weakneſs, when we can go no farther, is by no means a Reaſon for ſuperſeding all Attempts, or any Excuſe for not going as far as we can. We cannot effect the Whole: but we muſt not, upon that Pretence, ſit down with our Arms folded, and gape up for extraordinary Supplies at the Hand of Providence, while ourſelves do Nothing. We are directed

Pſal. lxvi. 16.

ed to *caſt our Care upon God:* but we are no where encouraged to caſt our Idleneſs or our Extravagancies upon him. And yet even This is done; when we expect, that he will furniſh our Vanity and Profuſeneſs, or grant Relief and Succeſs, without any Degree of Care or Concern to help our ſelves. This is the Caſe both of our Temporal and Spiritual Affairs, that Neither of them will be done without us. And indeed, in the Buſineſs of This World, moſt Men of any common Prudence ſeem well enough aware of it. The Generality of People perhaps are rather too ſollicitous, too eagerly employed, on That Account. But, in the weightier Matters of the Next, where our Endeavour and Concern are full as neceſſary, and ought at leaſt to be equal in our Thoughts and Regard; They are miſerably negligent and ſupine; and think, that now and then a lazy Prayer, though never ſeconded by their own Pains, is all that needs. Hence it ſo often comes to paſs, that Men complain of praying to no purpoſe, and charge God fooliſhly with not hearkening to their Petitions. Whereas the Failing, if duly examined, is all the while at home. And their Hopes miſcarry, not from any Want or Backwardneſs in Him to hear or help; but from want of their own Diligence, and of taking proper Methods for the compaſſing their Purpoſes. It is not eaſily to be conceived, how great and happy a Change this Conſideration duly apply'd would make; How it would quicken and invigorate our Actions; And what a World of injurious and unbecoming Reflections it would prevent, which Perſons, loth to ſeem in fault Themſelves, are uſed to caſt upon Grace and Providence. They bewail their Infirmities, or their Temptations; Their Inability to conquer ſome Darling Paſſion, or to free themſelves from the Bondage of ſome reigning Luſt; and, leſt their Slips and Falls ſhall lie at their own Doors, take great Pains to make the World and themſelves believe, that they have

prayed fervently and frequently, but are never the better. But ſuch Men, in Truth, ought to lament and condemn themſelves. And, as in moſt Caſes, the Blame is but too manifeſtly Ours; So, where it is not evident, it will become us to ſuſpect, and be very jealous of our Selves; rather indeed to ſuſpect any thing, than once imagine, that God is wanting in his Helps, or can be falſe to his gracious Promiſes. For he *who aſks thus in Chriſt's Name*, that is, who prays as he ought to pray, in this *Third* Reſpect, 'tis certain, never aſks in vain.

4. But the principal and moſt proper Intent of this Expreſſion is That, which I reſerved for the *Fourth* and Laſt Place; Approaching the Throne of Grace, I mean, with an humble Confidence in the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt; and reſting our Souls upon Him alone for the Mercy and Good Acceptance of God. Thus did the Apoſtles in the Matter more immediately concerned in this Paſſage. In the Miracles wrought by Them for Confirmation of the Truth, they conſtantly invoked the Name of Jeſus Chriſt. When Strength and Limbs were reſtored to the Lame, they are commanded in *the Name of Jeſus to ſtand up and walk*; When the Sick recovered their Health, they declare, that *Jeſus Chriſt made them whole*; When evil Spirits were to be diſpoſſeſs'd, they are *commanded in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt to come out of* the Patient. The uſual Method of performing ſuch Cures was by laying on of Hands, and Prayer. The Requeſts put up to God for the Confirmation and Increaſe of this Power, intreat that *He would ſtretch forth his Hand to heal, and that Signs and Wonders might be done by the Name of his holy Child Jeſus.* And when theſe Petitions at any time had their Effect to the Amazement of all Beholders, particular

Acts iii. 6.
— ix. 34.
— xvi. 18.
— xxviii. 8.
Jam. v. 14, 15.
— iv. 30.

Care

Care was taken to prevent thoſe Effects being attributed to the Apoſtles themſelves; by ſolemn and publick Declarations, that they were not owing to any *Power or Holineſs* of their *own*, but muſt be aſcribed entirely, to *Jeſus, whom God had glorified, and to Faith in his Name.* So —iii. 12, 13, 16 —iv. 10.
conſtant a Dependance upon Chriſt did the very Manner of working thoſe Miracles expreſs, which he promiſes the Power of, and preſcribes the Qualification for here. And ſo juſt were the Doers of them to their great Maſter's Honour; in diſclaiming all Right to any Glory from thence, all Part in the Operation, except that only of Suppliants for, and Inſtruments in the Uſe of, theſe Supernatural and truly Divine Gifts.

And herein they are Our Patterns. For We, like Them, muſt bring the Name of Chriſt along with us; and, whether we deſire to be *forgiven thoſe things, whereof our Conſciences are afraid*, or to receive Supplies ſuitable to *Collect xii. S. aft. Trin.*
our Weakneſſes and our Wants, muſt come to God in a due Senſe, that both the One and the Other ſort are ſuch things, *as we are not worthy to aſk, but thro' the Merits and Mediation of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Accordingly ſuch Forms as theſe have obtained in all Ages and Parts of the Church. And moſt deſervedly; ſince this is a manner of Worſhip peculiar to Chriſtians. It is an eſſential and diſtinguiſhing Property of Our Religion: Of abſolute Neceſſity to be obſerved, and conſequently of very great Importance to be rightly underſtood. To which purpoſe I ſhall now endeavour to ſet in a true Light, by repreſenting, as plainly and briefly as I can, The Neceſſity, and the Efficacy, of Prayers thus qualified.

1. It was obſerved before, that the vaſt Diſtance between an Almighty Creator, and Creatures ſo poor and low as We are, required an expreſs Encouragement to

juſtify our Addreſſes to him. And ſuch Encouragement might reaſonably enough be hoped for; conſidering, that our Natural Notions of God repreſent him infinitely Good, as well as infinitely Great. The Wiſe Man's Argument is certainly very juſt, that *God loveth all things that are*, becauſe he *would never have made any thing, if he had hated it.* And this Affection in ſuch a Being, it is agreeable to ſuppoſe, would move the common Maker, not only to preſerve the things made by him; but to allow to each of them ſuch Degrees of Happineſs, as their reſpective Order and Condition ſhould render them capable of. Thus, ſo far as our Knowledge of Nature will carry us, other Creatures ſeem to have been dealt with. And thus Revelation aſſures us Man was dealt with too: Only with this Difference, that He, being qualified for a voluntary Obedience, was admitted into Covenant with God, and had his Happineſs ſuſpended upon Terms. When the Terms were broken, all Title to the Privileges depending on the keeping them was forfeited and gone. For the Creature, not continuing the ſame it was made, had thenceforth diſcharged God of all Obligations which he had vouchſafed to bring himſelf under, conſidered in the Quality of its Cauſe and Maker.

Wiſ. xi. 24.

If then the ſingle Conſideration of our Natural Vileneſs render'd it a mighty Condeſcenſion to permit our Acceſs to ſo Great and Glorious a Majeſty; How ſhall we preſume to draw near, and what Reception can we hope to find, when we remember that we are Sinners too? Is it not plainly One thing, to be diſtant, and beyond all Compariſon Inferior; and Another, to have changed our Nature, and ſo become polluted and odious to a perfectly Pure and Holy Being? If by creating us God be a Father, and We his Children; that Relation cannot ſtand thoſe any longer in ſtead, who have been Undutiful and Rebellious Children. If the Original

ginal Right of Creation conveyed to God that Dominion, which implies the Care and Protection of his Vaſſals; this Claim is loſt to Traytors, who have ſhaken off his Yoke; and as much as in them lies, alienated his Property, by enſlaving and ſelling themſelves to his irreconcileable Enemy. So plain it is, that Mankind thus degenerated, could have no right to cry any more unto the King of Heaven; could have nothing to look for at his hands, but Wrath and Vengeance; and, the more they underſtood of themſelves, the more Cauſe they ſaw to be overwhelmed with Guilt and Shame, Confuſion and Deſpair.

From hence it follows, that if after this there remained any Covenant-right to the Favour of God, this muſt belong to Men, by Virtue of ſome ſubſequent and better Covenant. A Covenant of Mercy; ſuited to the Circumſtances of ſinful Men, and ſuch as inſpires Hope by looking up to Him, not now merely as a Creating, but much more as a Gracious and Forgiving, God. A Covenant, which provides a Saviour and Redeemer from the Guilt and Miſery, into which all had been otherwiſe irrecoverably ſunk. And this is the Covenant with God in Chriſt; Typified and foretold from the time of Man's Tranſgreſſion; but actually accompliſhed and declared in the Goſpel. A Covenant all along ſo ordered, as to poſſeſs Men with a mortifying Senſe of their own Unworthineſs, and abundantly to ſhew, that it is *by the Blood of the Son* only, that any of us *have* now *acceſs to the Father*. Eph. iii. 12.

For to this End it was, that Sacrifices of Living Creatures were always a Rite of Religious Worſhip. By the ſhedding whoſe Blood Men were given to underſtand, not only that their own forfeit Lives were a Debt to offended Juſtice; but that all, who from thenceforward were ſaved, muſt be ſaved by the Blood of Another ſhed for them. This was intimated yet more fully

fully under the Levitical Law; When God appointed all Sacrifices to be offered by the Prieſt; When One only place was allowed to offer ſuch Sacrifices in; When One part of that Temple was made inacceſſible to all except the High-Prieſt; and even to him at all other times, except on the great Day of Attonement once a Year: (nor was he then to enter without the Blood of the Sacrifice) And, when the Prayers of the People were emblematically ſent up to God, in the Incenſe carried by the Prieſts into the Holy Place, and aſcending in Smoak before the Mercy-Seat.

Epiſt. for Wedn. *before* Eaſter, *and* Good-Friday.

The Subſtance and Meaning of theſe Figurative Ordinances have been in ſome Meaſure explained heretofore. But, as to the Subject of Prayer in particular, By God's keeping his Covenanted People at ſuch an awful Diſtance, and accepting their Oblations at the hands of the Prieſt only, was ſignified, that he muſt now be addreſſed to by the Mediation of Another: And who that is, we cannot be to ſeek, after St. *Paul* hath told us, that *there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus.* Again, that as God, ſo this Mediator, is but One, was farther ſignified, by confining all Religious Worſhip to that ſingle place, which was a Type of Chriſt's Body, the Tabernacle in which *the Word made Fleſh dwelt and manifeſted forth his Glory.*

1 Tim. ii. 5.

John i. 14.

Theſe Remarks concerning the Holy of Holies I cannot think capable of a clearer Expoſition, than that left us in the following Texts to the *Hebrews*; *The Prieſts went always into the firſt Tabernacle, accompliſhing the Service of God: But into the ſecond went the High-Prieſt once every Year, not without Blood, which he offered for himſelf, and for the Errors of the People: The holy Ghoſt this ſignifying, that the way into the holieſt*

Ch. ix. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12.

lieſt of all was not yet made manifeſt, while the firſt Tabernacle was yet ſtanding: Which was a Figure for the time then preſent: —— *But Chriſt being come an High Prieſt of Good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to ſay, not of this Building: Neither by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us.* And again, *Having therefore, Brethren, Boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the Blood of Jeſus, By a new and living way, which he hath conſecrated for us, through the Veil, that is to ſay, his Fleſh: And, having an High-Prieſt over the Houſe of God, Let us draw near with a true Heart in full Aſſurance of Faith.* Laſtly, St. *Paul* hath alſo compared Chriſt to the Mercy-Seat, by ſaying, *God hath ſet him* forth as a *Propitiatory*, for ſo the Word ſtrictly rendered imports. It being now with Us, as formerly with the Jews, that They, who hope to find God propitious to their Prayers, muſt ſend them up here; that is, muſt ſupplicate for Mercy in and by Him, and muſt obtain it (as the Apoſtle goes on) *through Faith in his Blood.*

Ch. x. 12, 20, 21, 22.

Rom. iii, 25.

From theſe, and ſuch other Alluſions to the Religious Worſhip of the Jews heretofore; and the Correſpondence our Bleſſed Saviour holds to them All, in the Chriſtian Worſhip now; it is evident, that all Prayer, without the Mediation and Merits of Jeſus, is deſtitute of Promiſe, or any Foundation whatſoever of juſt Hope to encourage it. It is alſo evident, that His being our Prieſt, our Sacrifice, our Mercy-Seat, doth depend upon, and follow from, his dying for us; dying in ſuch a Senſe, and to ſuch Purpoſes, as the Piacular Victims heretofore were underſtood to die for the Perſons that brought them. And from hence it is, that *Faith in his Name*, and *Faith in his Blood, being juſtified in his Name,*

Acts x. 43. Rom. iii. 25. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

and

Rom. v. 9. Acts ii. 38. Rom. vi. 3. and *justified by his Blood*, *baptizing into his Name*, *and baptizing into his Death*, are Phraſes equivalent in the Apoſtle's Writings.

This is alſo farther evident, from *Jeſus* being ſo often, and ſo expreſly, declared to be the Author and Cauſe of thoſe Bleſſings, which make the Subject of our Prayers. For, whether we aſk Pardon for our Faults; it is *through this Man* only, that Forgivneſs of Sins is preached unto us, *and by Jeſus Chriſt that God reconciles us to himſelf*. Or, Whether Grace to live better for the time to come; we *are renewed by the Holy Ghoſt*, *which God ſheds on us through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*. He is the Vine, without the Communication of whoſe Sap the Branches *can do nothing*, but *wither and die*: He the *Head*, *from whom the whole* Myſtical *Body*, *having nouriſhment miniſtred*, *increaſeth with the Increaſe of God*. If we implore any Bleſſings or Comforts of this Life; This is the beſt Confidence we have of Succeſs, that *He*, *who ſpared not his own Son*, *but delivered him up for us all*, *will* certainly be ready *with him freely to give us all things*. If Deliverance from, or Support under, Dangers and Temptations; we are called to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, as ſure to *find Mercy and Grace to help in time of need*; becauſe *we have an High-Prieſt* capable *of being touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*, and *who was in all points tempted like as we are*, *yet without Sin*. If our Deſires look chiefly beyond this World; It is for His ſake only that we can obtain them. On Him alone depends our Reſurrection; For *Chriſt is riſen from the dead*, *and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*: Which aſſures

Acts xiii. 38, 39. 2 Cor. v. 18. Tit. iii. 5, 6. John xv. Col. ii. 19. Rom. viii. 32. Heb. iv. 15, 16. 1 Cor. xv. 20.

us,

us that *He, which raiſed up the Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us alſo by Jeſus*: On Him alone the Happineſs we hope for in that State; For *this is the Gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*; Who, at his departure out of the World, left this Day's Conſolation behind him; that He is *gone to prepare* for his Diſciples a *place in his Father's Houſe*, and that *he will come again, and receive them unto himſelf; that where he is, there they may be alſo.*

2 Cor. iv. 14.

Rom. vi. 23.

John xiv. 2, 3.

2. After ſo much ſaid upon the Neceſſity, very little needs be added to prove the Efficacy, of thus aſking in the Name of Chriſt. For, beſides many Promiſes made upon this account in the New Teſtament, and all the Commands of ſeeking neceſſary Supplies, enforced with the Encouragement of receiving what we want; the Correſpendence between the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Religion, which is already ſpoken to give us an equal Right to thoſe of the Old Teſtament. There is not therefore one Aſſurance given to the Sacrifices under the Law, which does not ſtill more ſtrongly affect our Prayers under the Goſpel. For even thoſe derived their Force and Merit from the Typical Relation they bore to the Chriſtian Prieſt and Sacrifice; and as *we* now *are*, ſo they likewiſe were, *accepted in the Beloved*; Even him, *in whom we have Redemption through his Blood.* Accordingly upon this Capacity it is, that the Author to the *Hebrews* lays ſo very great a Streſs, through the whole Courſe of his Argument in that Epiſtle: Declaring Him *our merciful and faithful High-Prieſt, able to ſuccour them that are tempted*; and *to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come to God by him; ſeeing he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for us.* In ſhort, There is ſo cloſe a Connexion between the Merit of our Lord's Sacrifice, and the Power of his Interceſſi-

Eph. i. 6, 7.

Heb. ii. 17. 18. —iv. 15. —vii. 25.

on;

on; that it is now as great an Indignity to diſtruſt of Mercy and Acceptance, as it would have been to flatter ourſelves with Expectations of ſucceſs without it. Had not Chriſt died, it had been Impudence to *hope*; but after that, it is Infidelity to *doubt*: Becauſe ſuch Doubt would, by neceſſary Implication, infer a queſtioning either the Value of his Sufferings, or the Sufficiency of his Power, or the Truth of his Promiſes; And ſo in Fact reflects on the whole Scheme of Revealed Religion.

I cloſe this Argument with a Remark or Two, of which one would think there ſhould not be any, and yet Experience proves there is but too great need. The One is, that this Benefit of being heard when we aſk in Chriſt's Name, is confined, as the other Goſpel-Privileges are, to thoſe who firmly believe in and ſincerely obey him. Men may call themſelves Chriſtians to no purpoſe at all; for they do not belong to Chriſt, unleſs he be depended on as their Prieſt and Sacrifice, and obſerved with the Duty owing to their Lord and King. They that deſire to have their Perſons reconciled, and their Prayers recommended, muſt pray in Faith. But Faith without Works ſuitable to it, is accounted dead, and can have no effect, but ſuch as is worſe than none, the Reproach and Self-Condemnation of the Believer.

2. By the Correſpondence between the Legal and this Goſpel High-Prieſt, we may perceive not only the Efficacy, but the Duty of Prayer. God of old manifeſted his favourable Preſence at the Mercy-Seat; He does the ſame now to Chriſtians, in Him, of whom that Propitiatory was a Type and Shadow. But this is done in both Caſes, to the Prieſt offering up the Prayers of the People: And he cannot in this reſpect do the Office of a Mediator for Them, who bring Him no Prayers to offer. For his Buſineſs is not to pray for thoſe who neglect to pray for themſelves, but to ren-

der

der the Prayers of thoſe who aſk effectual. Let us therefore, in a due ſenſe of our Obligation and Intereſt, be fervent and frequent at the Throne of Grace; and eſteem it a moſt valuable Privilege, that we may come thither boldly, when *aſking in Chriſt's Name.* That is, as you have ſeen under this Laſt Head, When we humbly and heartily acknowledge ourſelves leſs than the leaſt of all God's Mercies: When we diſclaim all Deſert of our own, and approach, as becomes miſerable, but believing and penitent, Offenders: When (after the Example of our Eſtabliſh'd Church in her admirable Liturgy) we interpoſe the moſt prevailing Name of *Jeſus* the Beloved in all our Devotions; And when, with the loweſt Opinion of our own Vileneſs, which makes us unworthy to beg *Any Thing*, we do join ſo high and honourable a Truſt in His Merits, that we make no doubt of obtaining, for His ſake, *Every thing* that is expedient for us. For the more meanly we conceive of ourſelves, (and 'tis but too evident we cannot exceed on that hand) the nobler and juſter is our Faith in our Saviour's ineſtimable Sacrifice, and all-powerful Mediation for us. To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and forever. *Amen.*

St. BARNABAS *the Apoſtle.*

A ſhort Account of St. BARNABAS *the Apoſtle.*

THE Scripture acquaints us, that his Name was originally *Joſes*, that he was deſcended of the Tribe of *Levi*, but born at *Cyprus*. This laſt was a Circumſtance neceſſary to be added, Acts iv. 36.

for

for clearing the next thing related of him, *viz.* That he ſold an Eſtate, and brought the Purchaſe-Money to the Apoſtles, to be put into a common Fund, then apply'd to the Suſtenance of poor Chriſtians. For, though within the promiſed Land the Levites had no proper Eſtates; yet if any of that Tribe ſettled in other Countries, this Law could not be there any bar to their enjoying like Properties with the Natives of that place. Hereupon, as one of the firſt or moſt liberal Contributors to ſo Charitable a Deſign, he ſeems to have received the Name of *Barnabas*, interpreted by St. *Luke* the Son of Conſolation.

In Loc. Though St. *Chryſoſtom* (attending, I ſuppoſe, to the word *Nabi*, a Prophet) aſcribes this Name to thoſe large Endowments and Virtues, which qualified him ſo excellently for the great Work he was deſigned for. Such as the Collect for this Day refers to, and the Epiſtle deſcribes, when ſaying, *He was a good Man, full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of Faith.*

Acts xi. 24.

Euſeb. *Hiſt.* I. C. 12. L. II. C. 1. Clem. Alex. Strom. II. *p.* 412.

Whether he were, as ſome affirm, brought up with St. *Paul* under *Gamaliel*, is not certain. It ſeems to be much more ſo, that he was one of our Lord's Seventy Diſciples. Upon news of the good Succeſs, which the publiſhing Chriſt's Doctrine by ſome *Cyprians* and *Cyrenians* had found at *Antioch*, he was ſent thither by the Apoſtles to confirm the new Chriſtians there. The number of Converts grew ſo faſt upon his hands, that he called in the Aſſiſtance of St. *Paul*. Theſe two continued mutual Coadjutors for a conſiderable time; the Effects and Methods whereof have been already related, in the larger account given of St. *Paul*. The Occaſion of their Parting was there alſo taken notice of. Upon which at preſent it ſhall ſuffice to remark, That even theſe great Lights were Men of like Paſſions with Us; And, that God,

God, upon this occaſion, did moſt eminently illuſtrate the Wiſdom of his Providence, by rendring the Frailties of two ſuch Servants inſtrumental to the Benefit of his Church. For Each of them thenceforth employed their extraordinary Induſtry and Zeal ſingly and apart, which, till then, had been united, and confined to the ſame place.

After this St. *Barnabas* is ſaid, by Some, to have travelled to *Alexandria*, and from thence to have returned to *Judæa*. By Others, to have preached about *Liguria*, to have ſettled Chriſtianity at *Milan*, and to have been the firſt Biſhop of that Church. All ſeem to agree, that his laſt Labours were employed in his own native Country; and that, by the Malice of the Jews, he was tumultuouſly aſſaulted, and ſtoned to Death at *Salamis*, the principal City of *Cyprus*.

He hath left us One Epiſtle, reckon'd among the *Apocryphal* Writings of the firſt Chriſtians. By which Word is not meant always, that ſuch Writings were not genuine; but oftentimes, only that they were not received as Canonical. It is full of Piety and Zeal; frequently quoted by *Clemens* of *Alexandria*; written in a Style very Allegorical, but ſuch as the Engliſh Reader may be both entertained and profited by. The Opportunity of which is owing to the pious Labours of the preſent Right Reverend and Learned Lord Biſhop of *Lincoln*.

Hieron. *in Catal.* Euſeb. *Hiſt. Lib.* III. *Cap.* 25.

Pearſon. *Lect.* II. 10.

Strom. II. *P.* 373, 375, 389, 396, 410. V. 575, 577.

Apoſtolick Epiſtles, by Dr. Wake, 1693.

The Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* hath been by Some attributed to St. *Barnabas*; but that Opinion hath met with very little Credit.

The COLLECT.

Acts xi. 24.

O Lord God Almighty, who didſt endue thy holy Apoſtle *Barnabas* with ſingular Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; Leave us not, we beſeech thee, deſtitute of thy manifold Gifts, nor yet of Grace to uſe them alway to thy Honour and Glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

The EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE.

Acts xi. 22.

22. Upon hearing what ſucceſs the preaching of thoſe Brethren had, (mentioned, *Ver.* 19, 20.) the Church at *Jeruſalem* ſent *Barnabas*, to ſtrengthen and perfect the new Converts in the Doctrine they had received.

22. *Tidings of theſe things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jeruſalem: and they ſent forth Barnabas, that he ſhould go as far as Antioch.*

23. In purſuance of which Commiſſion, he travelled through *Phœnice* and *Cyprus*, and at laſt to *Antioch*; exhorting them to Perſeverance and Patience, and immoveable Conſtancy in the Faith.

23. *Who, when he came, and had ſeen the grace of God, was glad; and exhorted them all, that with purpoſe of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*

24. In which he was very ſucceſsful; for the Piety and Virtue of the Man, as well as the eminent Endowments of the Holy Spirit, qualified him admirably for a Work of this nature.

24. *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of Faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*

25. Which that he might the more effectually accompliſh, he called in the powerful Aſſiſtance of *Saul*.

25. *Then departed Barnabas to Tarſus, for to ſeek Saul.*

26. By whoſe joint Labours for a Year together the Goſpel gained ſo much advantage at *Antioch*, that there firſt, the Believers of it were ſolemnly ſtyled by the Name of *Chriſtians*, or, Perſons believing in, and belonging to, Jeſus Chriſt.

26. *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to paſs, that a whole year they aſſembled themſelves with the Church, and taught much people: And the diſciples were called Chriſtians firſt in Antioch.*

27. * Perſons endued with that Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which enabled them to foreſee and declare Events to come.

27. *And in theſe days came * prophets from Jeruſalem, unto Antioch.*

28.

28. *And there ſtood up one of them named Agabus, and ſignified by the Spirit, that there ſhould be great dearth* * *throughout all the world: Which came to paſs in the Days of Claudius Cæſar.*

28. * Throughout the *Roman* Empire, as indeed it happen'd about Two Years afterward, and the Fourth of *Claudius Cæſar.*

29. *Then the diſciples, every man according to his ability, determined to ſend Relief* † *unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.*

29. † This came very ſeaſonably, for the Famine, there particularly, was ſharp and long.

30. *Which alſo they did, and ſent it to the elders* ‡ *by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

30. ‡ To be depoſited in Their Hands, and diſtributed at Their Diſcretion, according to the Neceſſities of thoſe under their Care.

COMMENT.

THE Subject of thoſe good Tidings, referred to, *Ver.* 22. is a great Number of Believers *turned to the Lord.* And the Occaſion of this numerous Converſion is very remarkable. The *Eighth* Chapter had taken notice of a terrible Perſecution, immediately after the Death of St. *Stephen.* The Rage hereof diſperſed the new Believers, and render'd *Jeruſalem* incapable of affording Safety or Protection, for thoſe that made publick Profeſſion of Chriſt. This diſperſed the Diſciples indeed: But, at the ſame time, it diſperſed the Goſpel too; and open'd a Paſſage for the Word of Truth, wider and readier, than could have been found, ſuppoſing its Proſelytes quietly to have continued and aſſembled together in any one Place. Theſe Holy Fugitives, who (in Compliance with the great Law of Self-preſervation, and with our Bleſſed Lord's Direction in the Caſe) did, when perſecuted in one City, take Refuge in another; carried their Zeal for Truth to every City: and ſo powerfully recommended the Cauſe for which they ſuffered, that the Force of this Doctrine, whereſoever they arrived, made its own way, even through Prejudice and Perſecution. Thus were the Enemies of our Religion, intentionally and by De-

Ver. 1.

Matth. x. 23.

ſign, the greateſt Friends and Promoters of it, by Occaſion and in the Event. And, by the ſame over-ruling Providence, which was formerly obſerved to diſappoint the Malice of the Devil, and to bring Good out of the Evil of his Inſtruments, Wicked Men; The Succeſs of Chriſtianity was ſuch, that it does not appear to any conſidering Perſon, how the Propagation could poſſibly have been ſo ſwift, or the Eſtabliſhment of it ſo ſtrong; had leſs Induſtry or Cruelty been uſed at the very firſt, utterly to ſuppreſs and obſtruct its taking Root at all.

Goſp. Tueſday *before* Eaſter.

This Providence of God, in the Diſappointment of malicious Purpoſes, and converting the Sufferings and Sorrows of his Servants to their Own, and the common Advantage, ſeems indeed never to have appeared ſo conſpicuous and amazing upon any other Occaſion, as on that of founding and eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian Religion. To this Diſpenſation all that had preceeded were ſubſervient. The Importance and the Extent of this Bleſſing, The Difficulties it had to encounter, And the Neceſſity of demonſtrating it to be from God, required the moſt illuſtrious Evidence of a Divine Power. But God is in all Ages the ſame in Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, and Tender Regard for all that love and pleaſe him. Any Community therefore of Chriſtians, nay any ſingle Member of ſuch Community, may and ſhould, from ſuch Events as this before us, draw Inferences full of Hope and Comfort.

Hereſies, and Schiſms, and Factions, do frequently deform the Face, and break the Peace, of the Chriſtian World: But even thoſe have their beneficial Effects; and, by awakening the Zeal, by increaſing the Caution, by exerciſing the Meekneſs and Patience, by uniting the Hearts and Hands, and by exciting the Devotion and Truſt, of the truly Faithful, they do not only glorify God, in the brighter Shine of his Ser-[illegible]ight; but they raiſe the Credit, and ſtrengthen the

the Aſſertors, and confound the Adverſaries, of Truth, and Piety, and regular Conſtitutions.

Afflictions and Injuries, Poverty and Diſgrace, are ſome of the Inſtruments, made uſe of by the common Enemy of Souls, to work our Deſtruction. But Inſtances innumerable have been of God's interpoſing ſo powerfully with his Grace, that the Sorrows deſigned to bear down, have exalted and brightned, the Sufferer's Virtue. Nay, and his Wiſdom hath interpoſed ſo ſeaſonably too, in the over-ruling of Events, with regard to the Affairs of This World, that thoſe very Calamities, which portended nothing leſs than utter Ruin, have at length proved the viſible and immediate Occaſions of ſurpriſing, of much greater Proſperity, than without them, thus working together under a Divine Direction, could ever have been looked or reaſonably accounted for.

So often therefore as we caſt our Eyes on This, or other ſuch like Narratives of glorious and deſireable Effects, produced from Means, humanly ſpeaking, improper and unlikely; let us not fail to make ſuch Profit of them, as may do us Service in the Day of Adverſity. In all our Diſtreſſes, whether publick or private; under the moſt melancholy Apprehenſions for the Church, or for the State; when the *Foundations* are in Danger of *being caſt down*, and *the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs make us afraid*; let us remember that *God is in Heaven*, and *ruleth over all*; that *His Ways are not as our Ways*: And therefore, however he may ſuffer the Malice of Enemies, the Treachery of Diſſemblers, the Inſolence of the Profane, or the Deluſions of the Enthuſiaſts, to try or to correct us; Yet if we perſevere in our Duty, hold faſt our Profeſſion, and attend upon Him, with Patience, and Holy Truſt, and Chriſtian Prudence; the blackning Clouds will ſcatter, and the Lord will cauſe his Face to ſhine on his San-

ctuary, and prevent its Deſolation, for his Truth and Mercy's ſake.

Thus again, In our Perſonal Capacities: If our Worldly Cares be multiplied, our Expectations diſappointed, our Affairs embaraſſed, our Sorrows enlarged, our Bodily Sufferings grievous; Nay, even our Souls dejected for want of Spiritual Light and Comfort; Still let the Contemplation of God, and the Wonders of his Providence, ſuſtain us. That Providence, which never fails them, who in all their Ways, and under all their Temptations, acknowledge and patiently abide upon it; which orders all Events for the true Advantage of good Men; and gets itſelf more Honour, by ſuch unexpected Changes of Heavineſs into Joy, and the Darkneſs made clear as the Noon-Day.

II. For the Confirmation and Improvement of Converts made by the Zeal and Aſſiduity of their Perſecuted Brethren, the Apoſtle of this Day was ſent, with Authority to ſupply what might be defective by any want of the like Miſſion to their firſt Inſtructors; and to carry on the good Work, by Them ſo piouſly and ſo ſucceſsfully begun. Of whoſe Virtues and Abilities when we read ſo high Commendations; Care muſt be taken, that we do not ſo miſinterpret theſe, as to ſuppoſe the Glory of the large Increaſe due to any but God alone. The Seed of the Word proves fruitful or otherwiſe, according as it is received and cheriſhed, or deſpiſed and neglected. Much depends upon the Quality of the Soil upon which it is caſt; and the Preparations of this are from the Grace of God, exciting, and working with, the Wills of Men. This purges out the Corruptions which obſtruct its Efficacy, purifies the Affections, enlightens the Underſtanding, invigorates the Endeavours, and infuſes that general Diſpoſition to Goodneſs, without which the beſt Seed is an unprofitable Expence; and the Care of the

the ſkifulleſt Sowers is but Labour in vain. But tho' the Scatterers Hand be inſtrumental only; yet in regard the Power of the Goſpel is a Power of Perſuaſion; it is a particular Bleſſing to any People, that God uſes ſuch Inſtruments among them, as are moſt likely, and beſt fitted, to perſuade. Even in the Seaſon of Miracles, the Extraordinary Gifts did not ſuperſede the Ordinary; They only ſupplied their Weakneſs, and wrought Effects of which Thoſe were incapable. When therefore, to the Endowments of the Holy Ghoſt this Hiſtory adds the Goodneſs and Faith of *Barnabas*, as Means of *great Numbers believing, and turning to the Lord*; the Effect *Ver.* 24. is, in the Nature of the thing, very ſuitable to the Cauſe. For the Fruit of the Miniſtry may moſt reaſonably be expected to abound, where Actions teach as well as Words; and when the Diligence of Exhortation is ſeconded and ſet home upon the Hearers, by the Influence of Example. Great Thanks are due to God for the Benefit of ſuch Teachers: Great Reſpect, and Honour, and Praiſe, are due to the Teachers themſelves; But eſpecially, Great Care and Jealouſy are required of the Souls, under their Charge. Becauſe, if the Product of ſuch Lives and Labours be not great, the Condemnation of them, whoſe Unfruitfulneſs diſappoints their Labours, cannot but be very great.

III. Another thing worthy of Remark upon this Occaſion, is the impoſing upon the Believers that Name, which hath ever ſince been made their Diſtinction, and juſtly eſteemed their Glory, all the World over. The Enemies of the Goſpel did in Scorn call them *Nazarenes*, The *Men of the Sect*, and the like. Among themſelves they were ſtyled *Diſciples*, *Believers*, *Brethren*; and had ſuch other Titles, as imported Faith and Charity. But now the Succeſſes of *Paul* and *Barnabas* had given them ſo much Confidence;

that, at *Antioch* firſt, they adventured publickly and ſolemnly to take the Name of *Chriſtians:* Or Perſons belonging to, and believing in, Jeſus of *Nazareth*; as the Chriſt of God, the Lord and promiſed Saviour of the World. That this diſtinguiſhing Character was taken in ſolemn manner, we have reaſon to conclude from the Propriety of the Original Word. For χρηματίσαι is uſed with regard to Edicts and Proclamations; Such particularly, as contained the People's Profeſſions of Allegiance to Emperors, and the Privileges granted by Them to the People; After which mutual Declaration, the Emperor in that Place was publickly acknowledged, and the Accounts of State-Tranſactions were reckoned from that *Æra.* As a farther Proof of this, we have the manner of impoſing this Name deſcribed; That it was done in an open Aſſembly, by *Euodius* then Biſhop of *Antioch*, and Succeſſor to the Apoſtle St. *Peter* in that See, at the beginning of *Claudius*'s Reign; and ten Years after our Lord's Aſcent into Heaven. Theſe are Circumſtances too conſiderable to be overlook'd, becauſe all virtually contained in the Greek Expreſſion; which gives a quite different Notion of the thing, from that too feeble rendring of being *Called Chriſtians.* And as St. *Luke*, the Author of this Book, could not find a more forcible or proper Phraſe for the Solemnity of this Denomination; ſo he could not do greater Honour to his own City *Antioch*, than by acquainting Poſterity, that the Proſelytes of that Place had, firſt of all others, the Courage thus to take upon them a Name, which every part of the believing World gladly derive from them, and deſire to be known by.

See Gregory's *Notes, Pt.* 1. *Ch.* 36.

But it is of much leſs Concern, that my Reader ſhould underſtand the manner of this Name being firſt given, than that he ſhould be duly ſenſible of the weighty Obligations, which follow upon its being conſtantly

ſtantly borne by us. Now theſe cannot poſſibly be leſs, than a firm Belief of the Doctrines, a conſcientious Obedience to the Precepts, and as exact a Conformity as we are capable of to the Example of that Chriſt, after whom we are called. Where theſe are not obſerved; the Name, which is meant for our Crown and Joy, becomes our Condemnation and Reproach. To preſerve an inceſſant Remembrance of theſe Engagements, each Perſon, at the time of his being incorporated into Chriſt's Body, receives that, which is termed his Chriſtian Name. A Name, deſervedly placed before the Other; by reaſon it intitles us to Advantages more valuable, than any poſſible to deſcend from our Anceſtors. A Name more ſtrictly Ours, than that of our reſpective Families; becauſe taken by us, not derived down to us. A Name, which we are infinitely more concerned to do Credit to, than that other; becauſe it is a Mark and Badge of that Covenant with God, upon the ſincere Diſcharge whereof all our Hopes and Happineſs depend. And therefore, *Laſtly*, A Name very properly enquired of, at the beginning of our Church-Catechiſm; becauſe it is the Signature of our Profeſſion, and an indelible Monument of having contracted for thoſe Duties, in which the Child is there about to be inſtructed. In a Word, If it be deſervedly accounted Baſeneſs and Degeneracy, to ſtain our Blood, and reflect Shame back upon thoſe Fore-fathers, who were Men of like Frailties and Paſſions with ourſelves; Think, how heinous a Provocation it muſt needs be, when thoſe who *name the Name of Chriſt do not depart from Iniquity*; When ſuch miniſter Occaſion to Libertines and Infidels, to blaſpheme the Son of God and his Goſpel, through their impure and vicious, that is indeed, their infamous, abſurd, and contradictory Converſation. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

IV. The *Laſt* Clauſe of this Scripture confirms my Remark upon the *Firſt*. For, what could more conduce

duce to the Honour of the Name ſo lately taken, than thoſe Fruits of Charity, ſo agreeable to the Import of it, ſent as a Relief againſt the Approaching Famine?

Antiq. L. XX. *C.* 2. The Extremity and Extent hereof *Joſephus* deſcribes at large. But the Supplies here mentioned, were principally applied to *Judæa*. Probably, becauſe there the Calamity fell heavieſt, becauſe Believers there were like to find leaſt Pity, and becauſe this was a fitting Teſtimony of Gratitude, to the Country, from whence the Means of their Converſion firſt came. So early had theſe Chriſtians at *Antioch* learnt the Equity of that Argument, uſed afterwards by St. *Paul*; and indeed ſo far from Chriſtians are They, who learnt it not; *If we have ſown unto you ſpiritual things; Is it* (ought it to be accounted) *a great thing, if we ſhall reap your carnal things?*

1 Cor. ix. 11.

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE. *St.* John xv. 12.

12. See the Comment. 12. *THIS is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

13. The higheſt Inſtance of Kindneſs capable of being expreſſed, is for one Friend to ſave the Life of another, by a voluntary laying down his own, in the ſtead, and as the Purchaſe of it. 13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

14. Now this Proof I am about to give of my Love to You; whom I eſteem my Friends, while ye continue obedient to my Commands. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.*

15. And accordingly, though your Maſter, I do not treat you in the Quality, nor keep you at the diſtance of Servants; but, converſing with the Freedom and Affection of a Friend, have imparted to you all ſuch Purpoſes and Secrets of my Father, as are for your Advantage to know. 15. *Henceforth I call you not ſervants; for the ſervant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*

16. *Ye*

16. *Ye have not choſen me, but I have choſen you, and ordained you, that you ſhould go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit ſhould remain: that whatſoever ye ſhall aſk of the Father in my Name, he may give it you.*

16. All which is the Effect of my free Love, which made choice of you (without the Engagement of any antecedent Affection of Yours to me) to be Attendants on my Perſon, Hearers of my Doctrine, Witneſſes of my Miracles, and glorious Inſtruments of planting and eſtabliſhing a Chriſtian Church, to laſt till the World's End. For the Succeſs of which great Work, whatever ſhall be needful, God will give it to the Prayers put up in my Name. (See the Goſp. St. *Philip* and *Jacob*'s Day.)

COMMENT.

AFter all that hath been written, in the forgoing Parts of this Work, upon that Love, which the Goſpel for the Day begins with commanding, I ſhould hope the Chriſtian Readers might now be addreſſed by me, as the *Theſſalonians* were once by St. *Paul*, *As touching Brotherly Love ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another.* But, in regard it is not only a very poſſible, but a very frequent Caſe, for Men to acknowledge themſelves obliged to Duties in general, without either duly conſidering the full and proper Force of all the Motives which induce ſuch Obligation; or diſcerning the juſt Meaſures and Degrees, to which they ought in Reaſon to aſpire: Upon theſe Accounts I could not but think it ſeaſonable once again to preſs this Matter, from the particular Enforcement of our Lord's Example: And to urge the Neceſſity of this Qualification, *viz.* the *Loving one another as* Chriſt *hath loved us*. 1 Theſſ. iv. 9.

Now this Qualification may import Two Things. Either (1.) A Motive, *Why* we ſhould obey, Or (2.) A Pattern or Direction *How* we ſhould obey, the Command laid down before it. In the *Firſt* Signification it repreſents the Enquiry; In the *Second*, the Meaſure and Extent, of our Duty.

Some Difference there is among Interpreters, Whether of theſe two Senſes ought to take place here. A Diſagree-

Diſagreement of no great Importance; ſince Both, it is evident, are warranted by Scripture. For, when St. *John* ſays, *Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another:* He juſtifies Their Interpretation, who underſtand the Text, as a Command of Love, grounded upon, or at leaſt very powerfully ſtrengthened by, the Conſideration of Chriſt's Love to Us; And, that we ought therefore to love Others, becauſe He hath loved Us ſo very exceedingly. Again, When the ſame St. *John* ſays, *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, becauſe he laid down his Life for us, and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren:* He comes up to Their Meaning, who aſſert, that, by *loving one another as Chriſt loved us*, is intended, that *Our* Love to the Brethren ſhould be conformed to *His*, as its proper Model, or Standard; and bear a juſt Proportion and Reſemblance to it in all its poſſible Perfections.

1 John iv. 11.

1 John iii. 16.

I ſay in all its *poſſible* Perfections. For we muſt either have very mean and unworthy Apprehenſions of Chriſt, or very lofty and extravagant Notions of our ſelves, to ſuppoſe the beſt good-natured Man in the World capable of equalling the Kindneſs of this Saviour, in its utmoſt Excellence. And therefore theſe are to be underſtood, like thoſe other Expreſſions, which, command us to be *perfect*, and *merciful*, and *holy*, as, and becauſe, our Lord and *Father in Heaven is merciful, and holy*, and *perfect:* That is, that we keep this great Original always in View, and copy after it in little; Obſerving ſuch Proportions, as the vaſt Diſtance between God and Man render our Nature and Condition able to attain: That we make our Obligations to be like God, a ſtrong Incentive to our Endeavours of being ſo. Thus here, we are engaged to imitate the Love of Chriſt, to as great a Degree as we can: And we are likewiſe to ſtir up ourſelves to Charity, by

Matth. v. 48.
Luke vi. 36.
1 Pet. i. 16.

that

that very ſtrong Obligation to it, which this Love of His lays upon every conſidering Chriſtian.

My Deſign according at preſent is,

1. *Firſt*, To inſtance in ſome particular Qualifications, wherein the Love of Chriſt to Mankind both may and ought to be imitated by us.

2. *Secondly*, To ſhew the Obligation we have to follow his Example in theſe Reſpects, ariſing from the Contemplation of His Goodneſs to Us.

1. *Firſt*, I will inſtance in ſome particular Qualifications, obſervable in the Love of Chriſt to Mankind; ſuch as both may and ought to be imitated by Us, in Our Love of one another. And here we ſhall do well to conſider the bleſſed Jeſus as our Pattern; with regard,

Firſt, To the Nature of the Affection itſelf:

Secondly, To the Object, or Perſons upon whom it ought to be exerciſed: and,

Thirdly, The Proofs to be given of it, or thoſe Actions of Kindneſs, which are required from us.

I ſhall ſpeak to Theſe as briefly, as the Matter will well bear; and, under Each of them, repreſent the Obligation, which this Example lays upon us.

1. And *Firſt*, with regard *to the Nature of the Affection it ſelf.* Our Bleſſed Saviour's Love towards Mankind, we know, was voluntary, and generous, and free. It was not the Effect of any former Engagement, nor begun upon any proſpect of Advantage to be obtained, from the Perſons thus beloved. For *Who*, as St. *Paul* urges, *hath firſt given to him, and it ſhall be recompenſed to him again?* Rom. xi. 35. And *herein is Love*, ſaith St. *John*, *not that We loved God, but that he loved Us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* 1 John iv. 10. The Meaning whereof is, That all the marvellous Methods of Grace, and the great things done and ſuffered for us by Chriſt, were not by way of Return to any former

mer Kindneſs or Deſert on Our part; but the Motions of mere Mercy, and his own Will. He ſought not Ours, but Us. His Happineſs could have ſuffered no Diminution by our Miſery: But, when we had deſerved to periſh, he rather choſe to have his Mercy glorified in our Reſcue from Deſtruction, than to ſignalize his Juſtice in our Eternal Puniſhment and Ruin. And of this Choice no other Reaſon can be aſſigned, than his own exceeding Goodneſs, and the incomprehenſible Greatneſs of his Love. *He would have Mercy, becauſe he would have Mercy:* And Mercy triumphed over Judgment; Not becauſe it was better for Him, but becauſe it was more profitable for Us, that it ſhould do ſo.

Herein then our Lord hath left us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps, in a Kindneſs that is noble, and free, and undeſigning: That our Love ſhould not be mean and mercenary; ſuch as only does good to others, with a ſecret or diſtant Intention of ſerving our ſelves; but that it ſhould terminate entirely in the Party to whom it is pretended to be born, without any Hope or Proſpect of returning to our Profit again. And I may well call this a *pretended* Love only, ſince in truth, when thoroughly examined, it is but an empty Form and fair Diſguiſe. For, what Colours ſoever of Kindneſs it may be varniſhed over with, nothing but Self is at the bottom. This is not doing good Offices, but driving a Trade by them, and putting them out to Intereſt under-hand: Which, after all, is not only the moſt hypocritical, but the moſt ſordid, way of impoſing upon Mankind. For it abaſes the beſt and braveſt Virtue; It profanes the ſacred Names of Liberality and Friendſhip, by uſurping the Praiſes due to Theſe, while it continues not to be diſcovered; And, when it is, by tempting us to ſuſpect, that this narrow Principle is the conſtant Spring and Rule of every Man's Actions, and that there is no ſuch thing as true Generoſity, and diſintereſted Good-Nature, and Chriſtian Friendſhip, left in the World.

It

It is One thing, to conſider this Duty of Love, as mere Men; and Another, to conſider it as Chriſtians. Philoſophy and Human Prudence, when they urge it upon us, proceed upon Principles of Profit and Convenience. They tell us of the Benefit accruing from the Practice of it, to private Perſons, or public Societies: And theſe are Topicks, very proper for Reaſon and Policy to make uſe of for recommending it. But the Chriſtian Religion goes a great deal higher. And tho' it refuſe not Theſe Motives, yet hath it a reſerve of Others, peculiar to itſelf. It requires us to do good, becauſe it is good; It draws us off from the Conſideration of Preſent, to the Proſpect of Future and Greater Advantages; It expects, that we ſhould think the Command and Will of our Maſter a ſufficient Inducement, though there were no other to back it; that we in ſome degree reſemble God himſelf, who is bountiful and kind from the eſſential Goodneſs of his own Nature, and becauſe it becomes his Character to be ſo. And, as He is beyond all Imagination liberal and tender, though it be impoſſible for Him to receive or propoſe any additional Happineſs, from the Creatures he ſuſtains and favours moſt highly: So We, moved by an inherent Principle of Chriſtian Perfection, ſhould not ſit down firſt, and compute what Account our good Intentions or good Works will turn to; but carefully obſerve thoſe Rules of Generoſity left us by the Apoſtle, which fully expreſs our Duty with regard to the Point before us. Such are, *Not ſeeking our own Profit, but the Profit of many. Pleaſing every one his Neighbour for his Good to Edification.* 1 Cor. x. 33. Rom. xv. 2. *Looking every Man not on his own Things, but every Man alſo on the things of others.* Phil. ii. 4. *No Man ſeeking his own, but every Man another's Wealth.* 1 Cor. x. 24. And, as Chriſt, *Having loved his own, loved them unto the end,* becauſe of that inexhauſtible Spring of Goodneſs, which John xiii. 1.

was

was ever flowing, ever ſpreading itſelf to all who ſeek and receive its Communications: So ſhould Our Affection too imitate His, in the Conſtancy and Perſeverance, in the Sincerity and Diffuſiveneſs, of our Love. It muſt be *void of Diſſimulation*, not *weary of well-doing*, not growing hot and cold in our Hearts, according to the Ebbings and Flowings of uncertain Paſſion; but proceeding upon the ſteady Principles of Reaſon and Religion: Such as are always fixed and conſiſtent with themſelves; and, if purſued as they ought, will not fail to *make us increaſe* more and more, and to *abound in Love, one towards another, and towards all Men.*

Rom. xii. 9. Gal. vi. 9.

1 Theſſ. iii. 12.

Which leads me to the *Second* Particular, wherein our Lord's Example ought to influence us, and that is,

II. In *the Object of this Affection; or the Perſons upon whom it ought to be exerciſed.* Now any Perſon at all acquainted with the Goſpel, needs not to be told, *That* Chriſt was a Lover of Mankind in general; and that His Goodneſs was extenſive above (infinitely above) any that ever was in the World. Himſelf tells us, That *He came to give his Life a Ranſom for many: That* he was *lifted up* with an Intention of *drawing all Men to him: That he came not to condemn, but to ſave the World: That* the way was open, and, as *no Man could come to the Father but by him*; ſo whoſoever *ſhall come to him, he will in no wiſe caſt out.* And laſtly, *That* the Malice and Obſtinacy of wicked Men was ſo far from provoking him to leave off all kind Attempts of doing them Good; that he ſtill retained his merciful Inclinations; laboured long and often to gather thoſe, who would not be perſuaded to come in; and perſiſted in teaching, exhorting, arguing, reproving, lamenting, and weeping over, even the moſt Intractable, even the moſt Incorrigible. *That* he did all this, not only when

Matt. xx. 28. John xii. 32. John iii. 17. John xiv. 6. John vi. 37.

when he foreſaw of how little Effect his holy Labours would prove; but alſo, when the Continuance of them exaſperated his Enemies the more, and brought his own Perſon and Life into manifeſt Hardſhip and Hazard.

The Apoſtles in like manner teſtify, That the Deſign and Influence of Chriſt's Death and Sufferings was of Extent as univerſal, as the Blemiſh and Puniſhment of *Adam*'s Sin. And as by the Guilt of the *First Adam* Condemnation came upon All; ſo *by the Obedience of the Second the free Gift came upon All, unto Juſtification of Life*: That He came into the World with a Purpoſe *to taſte Death for Every Man*: To *ſave even the chief of Sinners*: To *make the Aliens and Strangers nigh unto God*, by reconciling them to Him, and uniting them into the ſame common Body with one another: And, in a Word, That in this chiefly *the Love of God commendeth it ſelf towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners*, that is, Enemies and Rebels, *Chriſt died for us*.

Rom. v. 12. *Ver.* 18. Heb. ii. 9. 1 Tim. i. 15. Eph. ii. 12, 13. Rom. v. 8.

What now can any Man conclude from hence, but that They, who are commanded to love one another as *Chriſt hath loved us*, muſt open their Hearts wide, and ſtretch their Affections, as far as He did His? That no part of Mankind ought to be excluded; and that a narrowneſs of Spirit can by no means be excuſed in a Chriſtian, which confines all Kindneſs within thoſe very ſtrait Lines, which either Nature, or Fortune, or private Profit, or perſonal Obligations, have drawn about us. My Meaning is this: That we muſt not love our next Neighbours only, for This is a Point of Convenience; Nor our Acquaintance only, for This is the Effect of Inclination, and we do it for our Pleaſure; Nor our Friends only, for This is required in Gratitude, and common Juſtice; Nor thoſe from whom we hope to receive Benefit only, for This is no more than Intereſt

rest would advise; Nor our Relations only, for This is the dictate of mere Nature; Nor them, who are of the same Church or Opinion with us only, for That is but a serving and valuing our Selves. All This is no more than the Sordid, the Covetous, the Proud, the Voluptuous, the Publican and Heathen, the Jew or the Samaritane would do: But the Christian must do a great deal more. He is to distinguish himself by higher Degrees of Goodness; even by *doing good to all Men, as he hath Opportunity*; by putting on Bowels of Charity for the most Miserable, the most Despicable, the most Neglected, the most Mistaken, the most Obstinate, the Worst of Men, the Bitterest of Enemies, the most Revengeful and Implacable, that even thirst after his Blood. For in all this Christ is our Pattern. He died, and, in the inexpressible Agonies of that most painful Death, prayed for the very Wretches that so maliciously persecuted, so barbarously tormented, and murthered him. And therefore well might the Apostle urge, as he does: *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* If the most grievous Provocations could have harden'd our Saviour against us, If any Worthlessness could have wrought in Him Contempt of our Condition, we must have continued miserable and lost to all Eternity. And therefore They, who love as He did, will not abhor the lowest Estate of the most forlorn Wretches, will not suffer the most disobliging, the most spiteful Behaviour, utterly to extinguish all Tenderness and Compassion, no not to the most unworthy Man alive.

Gal. vi. 10.

Eph. iv. 31, 32. Coloss. iii. 13.

These are such Truths, as People in cold Blood are generally well enough content to allow: Those People,

I mean, who conſider Religion at all, and are deſirous to be thought Chriſtians. They will, for the moſt part, freely declare againſt Hatred and Revenge; and, that they would not for all the World bear Malice, no not in Thought, againſt any Man breathing. But however clear they may profeſs their Hearts to be in this Matter, how univerſal ſoever their Charity and Good-will to the whole World; yet it is but too common and too viſible, that very little of this general and unreſerved Charity appears in the outward Carriage of many, who pretend to it in the higheſt Degree. Leſt therefore They, whoſe Reaſon convinces them, that the Love of Chriſt ought to be imitated in the Univerſality of it, ſhould delude their own Souls, by ſuppoſing that they love all Men, while they barely profeſs to do ſo; I thought it neceſſary to conſider Chriſt as our Pattern.

III. *Thirdly*, With regard to the Proofs of our Love, or the Inſtances wherein it ought to be expreſſed. For they, who *love one another as* he *loved us*, muſt, according to their Power, and as Occaſions offer, be ready to give the ſame Evidence of Their Affection, which he was pleaſed to do of His. And what that was the Hiſtory of his Life and Death takes very particular Care to acquaint us.

To enter into the detail of theſe Proofs were endleſs; ſince every Action, every Word of His was a freſh one. Or rather, All he did, and taught, and ſuffered, in the whole Courſe of his Appearing in our Nature, was but One continued Act of Love, diverſified in its Circumſtances, as the Wiſdom of the Agent, and the Occaſions of the Perſons for whoſe immediate Benefit it was intended, made ſuch Variety requiſite. In This he was ſo conſtant, ſo perfect, ſo lively and heroick a Pattern; that we need only contemplate His Behaviour, and frame our own by that Model, to practiſe this Virtue in its utmoſt Excellence. For, though ſuch ſinful ſordid

Souls as Ours, can never aspire to all the Perfections of this Son of God, who is Love itself: Though the Effect of the kind Inclinations we may have, can never be so great and so diffusive as His, by whose Kindness unspeakable Benefits devolve upon all Mankind; Yet we shall do well to copy after this great Original so far as we can. And that we are more especially concerned to do, in these Three Particulars.

1. *First*, By fitting our Expressions of Love to the Circumstances of other People, in such a manner as may be most proper and profitable for them. When I urged the extending our Charity to all Mankind, (under the *Second* Head) my Meaning was not, Either that we should love all Men equally, Or that we are to give the same Proofs of our Affection to all alike. Neither of these is reasonable, Neither so much as possible. But, in regard (by the *First* Qualification I laid down) our Love ought to be generous and free, and to terminate in the Benefit of the Persons to whom we profess it: It follows necessarily from hence, that, in doing Acts of Kindness, we are not to consider our Own Convenience, so much as Theirs, to whom we do them. And here again, we are not always to be governed by Opinion, but Truth; aiming at what will profit most, rather than what would please best. It is therefore highly necessary, that we study the Wants of others, in order to becoming as useful as we can. And, as our Blessed Lord sometimes instructed and exhorted, sometimes cherished and fed his Hearers by Miracles, sometimes reproved and upbraided their Faults with great Severity; So We, in like manner, if we will follow His Example, must dispense to Each, as we our Selves are able, and as Their Condition requires. To the Needy we must bring Relief; to the Oppressed and Injured, Protection and Assistance; to the Honest, Well-meaning, and Ignorant, Instruction; to the Weak, Encouragement; to the Sorrowful, Comfort; to the Wicked, Reproof; and to the Scandalous and In-

Incorrigible, Shame and Puniſhment; Forgiveneſs to our Enemies; Prayers and good Wiſhes to all the World. In a Word, Chriſt's Behaviour is a Rule to us, for doing All the Good we can; and for doing it to as Many as we can; and for doing it in the beſt and moſt Prudent Manner that we can. And, rather to hazard the doing ſomewhat, that may appear harſh, and give Diſpleaſure; than, by too great a Tenderneſs not to offend, and under the Diſguiſe of Value and Friendſhip, to do what in Truth is the part of any Enemy. Which leads me to the *Second* Particular in our Saviour's Behaviour, neceſſary to be obſerv'd and imitated by us. And that is,

2. That we make it our principal Endeavour, to expreſs our Love in Acts of Kindneſs to the Souls of Men. Our Saviour, 'tis true, was very merciful to the Bodies of Men. He ſuſtained their Hunger, he healed their Diſeaſes, he releaſed them from the Torment and Bondage of Evil Spirits; and he died at laſt to purchaſe Eternal Redemption for This Viler, in Conjunction with the Other more Valuable, part of us. But ſtill in all theſe, and in all his other Acts of Mercy, he had regard chiefly to the Souls of Men. Thoſe very Miracles, which beſtowed Bodily Health and Soundneſs, had yet a farther end in view; and were deſigned for the gaining them over to Holineſs and Truth. And in this Spiritual Life and Health it was, that their true, their great Happineſs conſiſted. Thus alſo We muſt ſhew all the Kindneſs we can to Men, in every Kind and Capacity. But chiefly ſhould we labour for their Spiritual Advantages. For no Charity is truly Chriſtian, which does not alway keep God and Heaven in its Eye, and direct the good Works it does, to the Salvation and Amendment of the Parties to whom they are done. All other Obligations, by which the Body alone is profited, are of ſo little Value, in Compariſon, that St. *Paul*, who yet was never behind hand in Gratitude, ſpeaks of thoſe People with an Air

of Diſdain, (if any ſuch there were) who thought them equal. *If we* (ſays he) *have ſown unto you ſpiritual things, is it a great matter if we ſhall reap your carnal things?* But, if the Kindneſs to the Souls of Men be ſo much greater, ſo much more to be choſen and practiſed, than any that can be done to their Bodies or Fortunes: How far from the Love in my Text is That which Men pretend, to draw their Friends and Companions into Sin by, and, under Pretence of honouring the Outward, deſtroy the Inward Man? Sure Theſe of all Mankind muſt not pretend to obey the Command here. This is not Courteſy, but Treachery and Cruelty; not Civility and Entertainment, But Brutality, nay even more than Brutiſh Exceſs; a Scandal to Human Nature, a Contradiction to Chriſtian Charity. For ſurely They, whoſe Profeſſion of Friendſhip tend to the damning thoſe, whom He took ſo much pains to ſave; do, leaſt of all Men living, *love one another, as Chriſt hath loved Them.*

1 Cor. ix. 11.

5. Upon this Principle of Chriſtian Charity, deſigning the good of Men's Souls chiefly, is grounded the Reaſonableneſs of my *Third* Particular, in which Chriſt hath likewiſe ſet us an Example. And that is, the thinking no Inſtance, no Act, whereby we may teſtify this Love, and profit Others, too great; but being ready and willing to promote the Eternal Good of our Fellow Chriſtians, at the Expence of any Temporal Inconvenience or Hazard. St. *John*, you muſt needs allow, hath carried this Point very high; when arguing expreſly, That, *as Chriſt laid down his Life for us, We ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren.* But Chriſt would not have thought the Bodies of Men, or any Temporal Happineſs a Cauſe, or Conſideration ſufficient for his Death and Sufferings. The reaſon this great Work coſt ſo much was, becauſe it was to redeem their Souls. And each of theſe He, who bought them, hath taught us to prize

1 John iii. 16.

prize above the whole World. Since therefore the Body is not the Man, but only the leaſt and meaneſt part of him; when the parting with This may prove an Inſtrument of great and manifeſt Advantage to our own, or another's Soul: The laying down Life, in ſuch a caſe, is agreeable to that general Rule in Traffick and Human Prudence, of exchanging a leſs for a greater Value. But We, who are commanded upon occaſion to expoſe or ſacrifice our Lives, are no where commanded, or ſo much as permitted, to commit a wilful Sin, for the Sake of any Man. And the reaſon is, becauſe this brings the Soul into manifeſt Hazard and Ruin. God can make a Man good amends for the loſs of This Life, but there can no amends be made for the loſs of the Next. He that dies to advance the Salvation of Others, takes the right Courſe for making both Them and Himſelf happy; but he that ſins againſt God, in pretended Love to another, does Him no Good, and Himſelf a certain Harm. And even Chriſt, who is our Standard in this Caſe, would not, could not, ſin, or be damned, to ſave the World. And though we are not under the ſame Impoſſibilities, yet we muſt be under the like firm Reſolutions, never to run the riſque of being eternally miſerable, for the ſake of any the deareſt Friend alive. Any thing ſhort of this, is agreeable to the Duty of *loving* as *Chriſt loved*: But This were to hate and to deſtroy our Selves. A thing neither reaſonable in its own Nature, nor agreeable to that Love of ourſelves, which Chriſtian Charity hath made the Meaſure of our Love to Others. Do, and Suffer, and Die for them we may; but Sin for their ſake we muſt not. It is abſurd, as well as unlawful, to deſire ſo dangerous an Experiment of Love and Friendſhip; And They, who give it, neither underſtand Chriſt's Precepts, nor follow his Example. Who, though he grudged no Suffering or Hardſhip upon Our Account; yet never left us Pattern or Permiſſion, of

being content to part with our Innocence at Any rate.

After insisting thus long on the Words, as they represent Christ's Love to be the Measure and Rule for Ours; I shall need to say but very little of them, in that Other Sense, which makes His Love the Motive or Argument of Ours; and implies, that we ought to *love one another*, because *he loved us*. For, Who are We, in comparison of Him, that we should grudge that to our Equals, which he condescended to, for the Benefit of poor Wretches, so many Degrees his Inferiors? But why do I talk of Degrees, where there is no manner of Proportion? For none indeed there is, none can be, between God and Man, Creator and Creature, Infinite and Nothing. Can any Love be thought too great, when provoked by such an Example? I said we were in comparison of God as Nothing. Give me leave to call that Word back again, for in very Truth we were worse than Nothing. As therefore the vast distance between the Son of God and Us, as Creatures, is an Argument for the Freedom and Generosity of our Love; that it should proceed without prospect of Return, and serve Those who are least able or likely to recompense Us: So, when we consider ourselves as lost and wicked Sinners, this enforces the *Second* Qualification, and shews that we ought to make it Universal. For how shall we dare to exclude, whom God hath not excluded? What Unworthiness can be a Bar to our Affection, when we consider, that all our Dependance, all our Hope, is in the Worth and Merits of Another? What Provocation can be so grievous, what Enmity so fierce, as should, with any colour of Reason, hinder Them from Forgiveness and Reconciliation; who, if they be not forgiven ten thousand times more, must be undone to all Eternity; nay, who are allowed to expect Forgiveness of their own Faults, upon this Condition only, that they from their Hearts forgive the Offences committed against Themselves? Once more:

How

How can we think any Proof of Our Love too much, when Chriſt hath done and ſuffered ſo much more for Us, than we do, or can, for one another? For never can the Condeſcenſion, the Meekneſs, the Patience, the Sorrow and Anguiſh, of his Myſterious Incarnation, his afflicted Life, his ignominious and painful Death, Never can theſe meet with, I will not ſay a Parallel, but any Inſtance of Charity fit to be named with them. What then can we do, in any tolerable Meaſure like His Love to us? What Wretches are we, how ingrateful, how inſenſible, if, after having received more than can be expreſſed, we refuſe to pay back a very little? I ſay, to pay back; for this is the only Method we have left, of expreſſing our Love and Thanks to Chriſt himſelf; ſince, in as much as we do it to the leaſt of theſe his Brethren, we do it unto Him.

I conclude with deſiring my Reader to obſerve, how prudent a Choice our Church makes, in propounding to our Conſideration this Lecture of Charity, on a Day, which gives us the Advantage of receiving, together with the Precept, an Example enforcing the Practice of it. For ſuch, in moſt eminent manner, you have ſeen the Saint of this Feſtival to be. He chearfully devoted firſt his Fortunes, then his Labours, and laſt of all his Life, to the Service of God and his Fellow-Chriſtians. This was indeed to love his Brethren, as Chriſt had loved Him. This we have reaſon to eſteem one of thoſe *ſingular Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, with which* this Holy Apoſtle *was endued*; and which we beg not to *be deſtitute of, nor yet of Grace to uſe them alway to God's Honour and Glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

Acts iv. 36, 37.

Collect.

St.

St. John Baptist's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. John Baptiſt.

IT is worth obſerving, that, whereas Other Feſtivals are celebrated on the ſuppoſed Day of the Saint's Death then commemorated, this is calculated for the Nativity of St. *John*. The only Nativity, except that of our Bleſſed Saviour, for which the Church aſſembles with Thankſgiving. The Reſt did by their Deaths bear Teſtimony to Chriſt already come: He died a Martyr too, though not properly a Martyr for the Faith of Jeſus. But the Circumſtances and Deſign of his Birth were ſo full of Significance and Wonder, That This in a particular manner claims our Praiſe to God. Becauſe his Nativity was a Warning and Pledge of our Saviour; and rendered him, as St. *Chryſoſtom* expreſſes himſelf, a Preacher, and Worker of Miracles, from the very Womb. Hence, ſays St. *Auguſtin*, it is, that the Church this Day goes out of her uſual Method, and pays a particular Reſpect to the firſt ſetting out of this wonderful Fore-runner.

Hom. *de Concep. S. Joan.* T. 5. p. 832. Ed. Eton. *Serm. de Sanct.* xx.

All that concerns this part of St. *John*'s Story, is ſo fully related in St. *Luke*'s firſt Chapter, and ſo much of it will occur in the following Diſcourſe, that no more need be ſaid of it. The Evangeliſt acquaints us, that the Fame and Expectation of this Child had ſpread itſelf through all the Country. This, we are told, provoked the Jealouſy of *Herod* to endeavour His Deſtruction alſo, at the time of ſlaying the Children in and about *Bethlehem*. *Zacharias* is reported to have been killed in the Temple, for refuſing to deliver up his Son; and *Elizabeth*, to have fled with him into the Wilderneſs, and ſo ear-

Luke i. 65.

ly to have entered him upon that ſolitary Life; which he perſevered in, till the Exerciſe of his Miniſtry called him forth, and manifeſted this more than a Prophet to *Iſrael*. St. *Matthew* deſcribes to us his Habit and Diet; *A Garment of Camels Hair, a leathern Girdle, Locuſts and wild Honey*; all reſembling the Rigour of that *Elias*, in whoſe Spirit and Power he came. And, that the Correſpondence might hold as well in the miraculous Proviſion, as in the Plainneſs of his Food; there was a Tradition, that his Mother *Elizabeth* died about forty Days after their Arrival in the Deſart; and that God commanded an Angel to feed this important Infant, till he was able to look out for his own Suſtenance.

Matth. iii. 4.

His Miniſtry will be conſidered in its place. His Impriſonment is by *Joſephus* imputed to *Herod*'s Jealouſy, leſt a Perſon of ſuch Influence upon the People ſhould diſpoſe them to any Inſurrection. *Macherus* was the place of his Confinement: A Town and Caſtle of great Strength, a little beyond *Jordan*, and near the *Dead Sea*. Here he was beheaded, and buried (ſay ſome) between *Eliſha* and *Obadiah* the Prophets. The Goſpels tell us the Provocation: That it was rebuking *Herod* for taking his Brother's Wife; and that *Herod*, who had a Reverence for *John*, was trepanned into this Execution by the Subtlety and Malice of *Herodias*, which took the Advantage of a raſh Promiſe made to her Daughter, and inſtructed her to aſk the Baptiſt's Head in a Charger. *Joſephus* relates at large the Wickedneſs, both of that Marriage, and of this Murther: The ſevere Revenge taken by *Aretas*, King of *Arabia Petræa*, Brother to *Herod*'s repudiated Wife: The Miſeries, which the reſtleſs Ambition of *Herodias* brought afterwards upon both *Herod* and herſelf;

Adricom. Reuben, 44.

Luke iii. 19, 20. Mat. xiv. 3, 12. Mark vi. 17, 28.

Antiq. L. XVII. Cap. 7. *and* 9.

See Dr. Whitby *on* Matth. xiv.

no

no less than Deprivation of his Government and perpetual Exile. And the Daughter is also said, by a Fall through Ice which broke under her, to have had her Head severed from her Body: So resembling that Death, which at Her Request the Baptist had suffered before.

The COLLECT.

ALmighty God, by whose Providence thy Servant *John Baptist* was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the Way of thy Son our Saviour, by Preaching of Repentance; Make us to follow his Doctrine and holy Life, that we may truly repent according to his Preaching, and, after his Example, constantly speak the Truth, boldly rebuke Vice, and patiently suffer for the Truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Luke i. 11—20. 36, 57, &c. Matt. iii. 2—8. Ch. xiv. 3—12.

For the EPISTLE.

Isai. xl. 1.

PARAPHRASE.

God is here introduced, sending his Prophets upon a glad Message; which Some refer, immediately, to the return of the Jews from the Captivity, threatned, *Ch.* XXXIX: But ultimately, to the Days of the Messias. The third and following Verses, as applied in the New Testament, put the latter of these Interpretations past all Dispute. And therefore I shall attend to that Sense only, as most suitable to the purpose of this Day.

1, 2. Carry my People these glad Tidings, to sustain them under their Sufferings and Fears, that the time of the Jewish Servitude and Hardship is drawing to an end; that their Sin shall be effectually forgiven; and that God is satisfied with the Punishments already inflicted upon that Account.

1. *COmfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

2. *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

3. *The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtrait in the deſart a high way for our God.*

4. *Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low: and the crooked ſhall be made ſtreight, and the rough places plain.*

3, 4. The immediate Introducer of this Gracious Diſpenſation ſhall be *John* the Baptiſt; who, by preaching Repentance in the Wilderneſs of *Judæa*, ſhall ſo diſpoſe matters for the Meſſiah's Appearance; as to do the part of thoſe Officers, who, upon the approach of Princes, are wont to go before, and ſee the Roads levelled and mended, and all made commodious for ſafe and eaſy Travelling.

5. *And the glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.*

5. And then God ſhall manifeſt himſelf and his Glory, by the Incarnation of his Bleſſed Son, whom he hath appointed to be Saviour of the World. This is God's own Word, and he will make it good.

Comp. Luk. iii. 5, 6. *and* Lu. ii. 26, 30.

6. *The voice ſaid, Cry. And he ſaid, What ſhall I cry? All fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flower of the field.*

7. *The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth; becauſe the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: ſurely the people is graſs.*

8. *The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God ſhall ſtand for ever.*

6, 7, 8. Man indeed is frail and feeble, his Power is not able to obſtruct or to bring about Effects like this; but God and his Promiſes can never fail.

Or, (as Others)

God gave this farther Meſſage; That the Levitical Law (called ſometimes in the New Teſtament, Fleſh, and a Carnal Ordinance) ſhall then be aboliſhed, and expire like a mortal Man; but the Goſpel (not reſembling it in Weakneſs or Unprofitableneſs) ſhall be the laſt Diſpenſation for bringing Men to God, and continue in force to the World's End.

Gal. iv. 29. —vi. 13. Heb. ix. 10. —vii. 18.

9. *O Zion, that bringeſt good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength: lift it up, be not afraid: ſay unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.*

10. *Behold, the Lord God will come with ſtrong hand, and his arm ſhall rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*

11. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd: he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.*

9, 10, 11. Let this therefore be publiſhed all abroad, beginning from *Jeruſalem*, and let it be carried all the World over; That God will exert his Power and his Mercy: The Former, like a mighty Conqueror ſubduing all that oppoſe him; The Latter, like a tender and compaſſionate Shepherd, cheriſhing and condeſcending to the Infirmities of all that obey him, and are deſirous to be gathered into his Fold.

The

The Gospel.

PARAPHRASE.

Luke i. 57.

57. *Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a Son.*

58. *And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, and they rejoiced with her.*

59. It being a Son, born above Expectation, and like to be the only One, the Relations were unanimous for his Father's Name.

59. *And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the Child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.*

60. His Mother (whether by an Impulse of the Holy Spirit, as *Ver.* 41. Or whether having known from her Husband, what Name had been imposed on him by the Angel, *Ver.* 13.) opposed it.

60. *And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.*

61. *And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.*

62. *And they made signs to his father how he would have him called.*

63. He by Signs in return intimated his desire of a Writing-table—This determination surprized them very much for the Reasons, *Ver.* 60, 61.

63. *And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His Name is John. And they marvelled all.*

64. But yet much more so did the accomplishment of what the Angel foretold, *Ver.* 20. by *Zacharias* recovering his Speech.

64. *And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.*

65, 66. All which became a general Subject of Discourse in *Hebron*, and all the parts adjacent, (Compl. *Ver.* 39. of this *Ch.* with *Josh.* xi. 21. and xiv. 14. and xxi. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.) And the wonderful Circumstances, with which this Birth was attended, made People presage great things from such a Child. And accordingly the Blessing of God appeared to go remarkably along with him.

65. *And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea.*

66. *And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of Child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.*

67. *And his father Zacharias was filled with the holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,*

68. Praised be God, who hath in mercy look'd upon the Misery of his People, and, by visiting them in Human Flesh, hath brought them effectual Redress.

68. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his People.*

69.

69. *And hath raiſed up an horn of ſalvation for us in the houſe of his ſervant David;*

69. By ſetting up the Kingdom of his Chriſt, to reign in *David*'s Throne, as a Deſcendant from Him, and a mighty Saviour;

70. *As he ſpake by the mouth of his holy prophets; which have been ſince the world began;*

70. In exact agreement, with the Revelations to this purpoſe, left by the Prophets of every Age ſucceſſively;

71. *That we ſhould be ſaved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;*

71. That They, who hate us and deſign our Ruin, ſhould at length be ſubdued, and We reſcued out of their Hands, by a ſuperior Power;

72. *To perform the mercy promiſed to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;*

73. *The oath which he ſware to our father Abraham,*

72, 73. All which he was ſo gracious, as long ago to engage his Truth for; and, to ſhew, that his Council in this reſpect was unchangeable, he confirmed it to *Abraham* with the Solemnity of an Oath. See *Gen.* xviii. 18. Comp. *Heb.* vi. 13—18.

74. *That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might ſerve him without fear,*

75. *In holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our life.*

74, 75. The effect of which deliverance from our Spiritual Enemies, muſt be that of ſerving God with a thankful and chearful Spirit, by perſevering conſtantly in all the Virtues, which his Son comes to teach us.

76. *And thou, Child, ſhalt be called the Prophet of the Higheſt: For thou ſhalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;*

76. And thou, my Child *John*, ſhalt foretel and immediately fore-run this Saviour, to fit Men for a due Reception of him:

77. *To give knowledge of ſalvation unto his people, by the remiſſion of their ſins,*

77. To give Warning of Him, and perſonally to point Him out to the People; that they, repenting, upon thy Doctrine, may be pardoned.

78. *Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us,*

79. *To give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

78, 79. By that unſpeakable Compaſſion of God, who hath ſent his Son from Heaven; that, like the Sun or Morning-Star, he ſhould diſperſe the Darkneſs of Ignorance and Miſery, and enlighten the Minds of a blind World, to find the Paths of Knowledge and Safety.

80. *And the Child grew, and waxed ſtrong in ſpirit, and was in the deſerts, till the day of his ſhewing unto Iſrael.*

80. This Child advanced in Natural and Spiritual Accompliſhments proportionably; and ſpent his time in ſolitary places, till the entrance on his publick Miniſtry.

COMMENT,

COMMENT.

THE Portion of Scripture for the Epiſtle, and that of the Goſpel, now before us, will be moſt properly treated of together; Becauſe Both agree in the ſame deſign, of explaining to us the Office and Buſineſs of that holy Perſon, whoſe wonderful Birth the Chriſtian Church this Day commemorates. It was, ſay *Iſaiah* and *Zacharias* unanimouſly, that he might *go before the Face of the Lord, to prepare his way.* Of the Nature of that Preparation, ſo far as it was intimated by the Metaphorical Expreſſions in the Old Teſtament, ſomewhat hath been ſpoken already. The farther Conſideration of it was referred to this place, and ſhall now be briefly taken under Three Heads. (I.) The Preaching of *John*; (II.) His Baptiſm; And (III.) Some ſignificant Circumſtances, relating to his Perſon and Manner of Life.

Goſp. iv. Sund. in Advent.

I. With regard to the *Firſt* of theſe more eſpecially we may underſtand thoſe Words of his Father; Who ſtyles this *Child, the Prophet of the Higheſt*, becauſe he ſhould *go before the Face of the Lord to prepare his ways*, by giving *knowledge of Salvation to his People for the Remiſſion of their Sins, through the tender Mercy of God, whereby the Day-ſpring from on High had viſited them*, &c. Which the Evangeliſts inform us, was done, by *preaching the Baptiſm of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins.*

Matt. iii. 1. Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.

The Prophets of former Ages might, in a qualified Senſe, be ſaid thus far to prepare Chriſt's way, that They alſo preached Repentance. But none of Them did or could preach it, in the manner *John* did. They did not ſo boldly, or ſo plainly, warn the People; how vain

vain thoſe Confidences were, by which they flatter'd themſelves in being the holy Seed, deſcended of the Stock of *Abraham*. They did not ſo clearly diſcover to them, that the Venom of the Viper ſtill lurked even in thoſe, who were highly exalted with a falſe Opinion of their own Sanctity, built upon a nice Obſervance of the Moſaical Ordinances. They did not draw the Scene, like Him; and ſet before their Eyes that unquencheable Fire, prepared for ungodly Men and vainglorious Hypocrites. But above all, they did not, could not, preſs the Neceſſity of Repentance, and the Danger of delaying it, by that moſt quickening of all Motives, *The Kingdom of Heaven* being then *at hand*. Conſequently They could leaſt of all be ſaid, like Him, to *go before the Face* (or, as the Hebrew ſignifies, in the Preſence) *of the Lord*. The Difference between Them and *John* being in this reſpect the ſame, as that of Meſſengers ſent long before, to give notice of the intended, but yet diſtant, Coming, and that of Officers accompanying the Motions, and immediately uſhering in the Perſon, of the Prince. Mat. iii. 2.

This Doctrine of Repentance he likewiſe inculcated in its utmoſt Extent and Perfection. He awakened Men to it by the Terrors of the Wrath to come; He contented not himſelf with bringing them to an humble Senſe of, and deep Sorrow for, their paſt Wickedneſs; but required a thorough Change, and *Fruits meet for Repentance*. A Change, not ſufficiently evidenced by forſaking old Vices, unleſs the Mind be alſo poſſeſſed with the Diſpoſitions, and the Life diſtinguiſhed by the habitual Practice, of their oppoſite Virtues. He puts their hopes of Forgiveneſs upon the right Foot; and ſuffers them not to be laid upon any of thoſe Actions, which, though the indiſpenſable Condition, are not yet the proper and meritorious Cauſe, of Pardon. He gave *knowledge of the Remiſſion of Sins* Mat. iii. 7, 12. Mat. iii. 8. Luke iii. 10. —14.

through the tender Mercy of God. Not that Mercy inherent in him, as a Being abſolutely perfect; Not thoſe Bowels belonging to the Character of a Father or Creator; But that, *whereby the Day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs.* Once more, Not to that Mercy, which ſent his Son, merely to diſcharge the Office of an Inſtructor and Guide: For, when he repreſents that Son to the People, as the *Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sin of the World,* This is a manifeſt Alluſion to the Lambs offer'd under the Law; and, to Perſons educated in that Diſpenſation, an Alluſion eaſy and familiar. The Inference from whence was obvious, if not neceſſary, that He was to take away Sin by the Death and Sacrifice of himſelf.

One cannot reflect at all upon theſe Particulars, and not ſee the fitneſs of that Preparation made by them, for Him, who came to reform the World, to eſtabliſh Righteouſneſs, to complete, and to reveal, the whole Myſtery of our Redemption. Had theſe Principles been entertained with the ſame Zeal they were taught, how ſmooth and eaſy had his Way been made? But They, who lay groveling in their Mire of Sin, affected ſtill to retain the Situation of *Valleys*, and refuſed to be *exaltcd.* The *Mountains* and *Hills* of Phariſaical Superſtition and Self-ſufficiency would not endure to be *made low.* The *crooked* Diſpoſitions of Covetcouſneſs, Ambition, Senſual Pleaſures, and Worldly Luſts, were not *ſtreightned*; nor the *Roughneſs* of Angry, Revengeful, Haughty and Uncharitable Paſſions *made plain*, by this Doctrine of Repentance. And, from that Inefficacy of a Preparation, ſo competent in itſelf, the Hiſtory of our Saviour's and his Apoſtles Miniſtry aſſures us, it was, that ſo great a part even of Their Labours was in vain. Mean while, what hath been ſaid abundantly proves, how well this part of *John*'s Office was diſcharged; and how eminently He, above any Other Prophet whatſoever,

ſoever, deſerved the Title of our Bleſſed Lord's *Forerunner*; upon the account of his *Preaching*.

II. Let us in the next place conſider his *Baptiſm*. Baptiſm was no new or ſtrange thing with the Jews; It was acknowledged and practiſed, as an Emblem of Purification from paſt Guilt, and a Rite of entering ſolemnly into Covenant with God. The Expoſitors of their Law agree, that this Ceremony paſſed upon the whole Congregation of *Iſrael*, juſt before the Law was given at Mount *Sinai*: And they underſtand that Command of God to *ſanctify them*, which we render *Waſhing of their Clothes*, of a Baptiſmal Immerſion of their Bodies. Their Cuſtom in all ſucceeding Ages hath been, to receive their Heathen Proſelytes by Baptiſm, as well as by Sacrifice, and (if they be Males) Circumciſion. A Practice, grounded on that Clauſe, which ſays, *One Ordinance ſhall be both for you of the Congregation, and alſo for the Stranger that ſojourneth with you, an Ordinance for ever in your Generations. As Ye are, ſo ſhall the Stranger be before the Lord.*

Exod. xix. 10.

Numb. xv. 15.

And as it was in point of the Rites of Admiſſion, ſo was it likewiſe in point of the Privileges, accruing by that Admiſſion into Covenant. The Jews receive their own Children by Circumciſion and Sacrifice; becauſe the Obligation of their Law, as to theſe, is Perſonal and Expreſs. But in Regard Baptiſm implies a State formerly unclean, they do not Baptize their Natives; as thinking, by that General Baptiſm at entring into Covenant with God at Mount *Sinai*, nor the then Body of the People only, but all ſucceeding Generations deſcending from them, to be ſanctified. In like manner, Though the Perſons of Proſelytes are baptized conſtantly; yet are their Poſterity, born after Proſelytiſm, never baptized: Becauſe accounted clean by the Baptiſm of their Parents, and ſo (as an eminent Writer expreſſes it) they *are already* Iſraelites.

Dr. Lightfoot.

I have inſiſted the longer upon theſe things, (which are ſet in a very clear Light by the late excellent Labours of a worthy and learned Divine) becauſe they help up to a plain Solution of a Paſſage; Which, by being miſunderſtood, hath miniſtred occaſion to a conſiderable Error, concerning the matter now in hand. The Meſſengers ſent from *Jeruſalem* to *John*, After he had declared, Who he was not, and What he was; proceed with this Queſtion, *Why baptizeſt thou then, if thou be not the Chriſt, neither Elias, neither that Prophet?* The Jews admit, that One, Commiſſioned by Divine Authority, is not ſtrictly bound up to the Law; but may act and appoint things, not mentioned there, or practiſed before his own time. From hence many have ſuppoſed Baptiſm to have been inſtituted by St. *John*; Either in the Whole, or at leaſt in the Signification of it, as a Rite intimating Sanctification of the Soul. Now the truth is, It was both uſed, and uſed as a Means and Emblem of purifying from Sin, before. But it was uſed thus to Proſelytes only; to Natural-born Jews never; except when the whole Body were baptized (as a Body) at Mount *Sinai*. That therefore, which gave ſurprize and offence upon this occaſion, was, that *John* adminiſtred Baptiſm to thoſe Natives, who were preſumed to have no need of it: An Indignity done to the ſuppoſed Holy Seed; ſuch as implied a Reproach of Uncleanneſs, and brought them down to the level of the deſpiſed Gentiles. And the requiring This, as a neceſſary means for Remiſſion of Sins, or Teſtimony of that Repentance he ſo earneſtly urged upon them, was (in their Judgment) a diſparaging Innovation, which nothing leſs than a Divine Authority could juſtify.

Mr. Wall of Infant Baptiſm.

John i. 25.

Mean while it is eaſy enough from hence to diſcern, how ſignally *John* above all others, was the Fore-runner of our Lord, in reſpect of his Baptiſm alſo. He firſt admi-

adminiſtred and exhorted to this Ordinance, (which our Saviour afterwards enjoyned) as an Evidence, requiſite for Every one to give in his own Perſon, of Penitence for Sins paſt; as a Profeſſion of a better Obedience; as a Title to the Privileges of a Covenant therein renewed with God, and (in ordinary Caſes) a neceſſary Protection againſt the Wrath to come.

But Faith is a Qualification for Baptiſm, of equal Neceſſity with Repentance. And thus alſo *John prepared the way of our Lord*, as he propounded Him for the Object of Faith to All who received this Ordinance at his Hands. Herein St. *Paul* is expreſs, *John verily baptized with the Baptiſm of Repentance, ſaying unto the People, that they ſhould believe on him which ſhould come after him, that is, on Chriſt Jeſus.* Acts xix. 4. 'Tis true, The Object of Baptiſmal Faith was afterwards enlarged, when our Lord himſelf inſtituted that Sacrament. Chriſtians are bound to profeſs their Belief in, and dedicate themſelves to the Service of, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. The Trinity of Perſons in the Godhead was a Myſtery reſerved for the Son himſelf to reveal; *John* taught it not, much leſs required the Profeſſion of it. This was one Imperfection in His Baptiſm. For His, though it prepared Men to be Chriſtians, did not make them ſuch; and conſequently, could not ſupercede the Uſe and Neceſſity of Chriſt's Baptiſm, even to Them who had been already baptized by *John*. The Caſe of the Diſciples at *Epheſus* puts all this out of Diſpute. They had been baptized unto *John*'s Baptiſm, and *yet had not ſo much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghoſt.* Acts xix. 2, 3. Whereupon, after St. *Paul*'s repreſenting the Deficiency of That in their preſent State, *when they had heard* the Argument quoted juſt now, *they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*; Ver. 5. *and when Paul had laid his Hands on them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them.* Ver. 6.

If it be aſked, Whether They were not baptized *in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, who, when baptized, were taught to believe on him that ſhould come after St. *John*, *that is*, *on Chriſt Jeſus*: I anſwer, They were not. Baptizing in the Name of *Jeſus* imports the Baptiſm commanded by *Jeſus*; and I can ſee no ground for that Diſtinction, which Some have inferred from the Variety of Phraſes uſed in this Manner; as if Baptizing *in the Name of Jeſus*, and baptizing *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, were ever deſigned to mean two different Sorts or Forms of Baptiſm. We are baptized in the Name of *Jeſus*, when we are Baptized into the Belief of the Doctrine taught by *Jeſus*; when after the Manner, and in the Form, inſtituted and preſcribed by *Jeſus*; when taking his Name upon us as Diſciples, and profeſſing Obedience to all his Precepts. The proper Notion of doing any thing in the Name of another, is doing it by the Authority, in Compliance with the Direction, or with a Dependance on the being upheld in it, by the Perſon ſo named.

Geſp. for St. Phil. *and* James, *p.* 288. *&c.*

But waving this; The Perſons, who, when baptized of *John*, were taught to believe on Him that ſhould come after him, were *not baptized in the Name of Jeſus*, becauſe, ſtrictly ſpeaking, they were not taught to *believe in Jeſus*. They were indeed taught ſo, by Conſequence and neceſſary Implication; becauſe taught to *believe on Him that ſhould come after John*, who was, as St. *Paul* truly affirms, *Chriſt Jeſus*. But they were not taught ſo explicitely, and in Terms; Nor did *John* at that time, either teach the Multitudes determinately, or as yet himſelf underſtand, that *Jeſus* in particular was the Perſon that ſhould come after Him. He knew, there was ſome excellent and tranſcendently great Perſon to whom the Title of *Coming after* belonged, with peculiar Reference to his own Office of *Going before*.

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And therefore the Baptiſm of *John* did contribute greatly to *prepare the way of the Lord*, as our Lord's condeſcending to receive it was the Method ordained by God, for the Perſonal Manifeſtation of him to the People. All theſe things are evident Conſequences of thoſe Declarations, made by the Baptiſt himſelf. *This is He, of whom I ſaid, After me cometh a Man, which is preferred before me, for he was before me.* John i. 30. *And I knew him not; but that he might be made manifeſt to Iſrael, therefore am I come baptizing with Water.* *Ver.* 31. And again, *I knew him not; but he that ſent me to baptize with Water, the ſame ſaid unto me, Upon whom thou ſhalt ſee the Spirit deſcending and remaining, the ſame is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghoſt. And I ſaw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.* *Ver.* 33. *Ver.* 34.

Our Saviour could not ſtand in need of *John*'s Baptiſm, as it was a Baptiſm of Repentance; by reaſon he had no Sin to be purged away. He ſuffered it, becauſe it *became him to fulfil all Righteouſneſs.* Matt. iii. 14. This being then appointed an Inſtrument of Purification to the Jews; it was not fit, that He, who came to be a Pattern of Perfection, ſhould neglect any Ordinance appointed by his Father, any Mark or Profeſſion of Sanctity: Not That eſpecially, which They laid ſo great a Streſs upon, and held in ſo high Eſteem, who joyfully heard the Praiſes, and *juſtified God being baptized with the Baptiſm of John.* Luke vii. 29. But above all, it was expedient, for the introducing that viſible and glorious Teſtimony of Jeſus being *the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well-pleaſed*, and whom it is therefore the Duty of all Men to hear.

Chryſ. T. VII. *Orat.* 95, 96.

Chap. iii. 22. Matth. iii. 17. *Comp.* xvii. 5.

Thus *John* was moſt eminently our Lord's Fore-runner, not only as a Preacher, but as a Baptiſt too; In that his Baptiſm was a ſolemn Rite of renouncing Sin; In that it was a Profeſſion of Obedience for the future; In that it opened the way for a more perfect Inſtitution of the like Nature; In that it exhibited Chriſt, as the Object of Faith, the Maſter and Guide Men ought to follow: For being thus baptized, they were thereby led and conſigned over to Him; and qualified for the Chriſtian Baptiſm, which exceeds that other in Dignity and Efficacy. For Here the Spirit accompanieth the Water. This confers by its own Virtue, actually and immediately, the Privileges imparted by That, accidentally and remotely. This confirms and compleats that Pardon of Sins, and thoſe Aſſiſtances of Grace, which belonged to no antecedent Waſhings, farther than as they were Figures of, and Approaches toward the Chriſtian; and is therefore by way of Diſtinction and Eminence ſtyled, *The waſhing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Tit. iii. 5.

III. Let us now, in the *Laſt* place, obſerve the Baptiſt preparing the way for Chriſt, in ſome remarkable Circumſtances relating to his Perſon and Behaviour.

1. The Firſt of theſe is His being foretold by the ancient Prophets; both as to the Character he ſhould ſuſtain, and as to the ſucceſsful Diſcharge of it. This we find done particularly, by *Iſaiah* in his *Fortieth*, and by *Malachi* in his *Third* and *Fourth* Chapters. Paſſages all apply'd to *John*, by the Evangeliſts, and by our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf. An Honour ſo uncommon, that ſome have underſtood him to be entitled *more than a Prophet*, Not only upon the Account of his immediate forerunning our Lord; But becauſe his doing ſo, and the Spirit and Manner in which it was done, were thought a Subject worthy of former and long diſtant Prophecies. Add to this the Predic-

Matth. iii. 3.
Mark i. 2, 3.
Luke iii. 4, 5, 6.
Matt. xi. 10, 14.
xvii. 11, 12, 13.

tion

tion of his Conception, Birth, Name, Manner of Living, and Miniſtry, by an Angel ſent from Heaven for that purpoſe. The ſame Angel which ſo quickly after brought the like but more joyful Meſſage, concerning our Lord himſelf. The Particulars of both indeed as nearly reſemble each other, as it is poſſible for the Accounts of Perſons ſo diſtant to do. So circumſtantial in this reſpect was the Preparation made for the Son of the Great God's Approach, by the Predictions of Him; than whom *there had not been a greater among them that are born of Women.*

Luke i. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26.

A *Second* Particular is his Birth. His Stock was of that Set of Men, whom God had choſen for his own, and ſanctified for the neareſt Approaches to himſelf in the Prieſtly Office. Both his Parents were of an Age that rendered Iſſue unexpected; and his Mother beſides under a natural Incapacity from her Youth. So that this Child was altogether miraculous; and, as ſuch, a proper Fore-runner for Him, who was born of a pure Virgin, without the Knowledge of Man: Becauſe the Sight and Certain Aſſurance of the Former aſtoniſhing Event would, when rightly conſidered, diſpoſe to the Belief of the Latter. That this was one Intent and Uſe of it, we have the Authority of an Angel to inſtruct us. Who, to eſtabliſh the Virgin's Faith, in a Meſſage unaccountable to Reaſon, and impracticable in Nature, urges this Argument, *And behold, thy Couſin Elizabeth, ſhe hath alſo conceived a Son in her old Age; and this is the ſixth Month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing ſhall be impoſſible.*

Luke i. 5.

Ver. 6.

Luke i. 36.

Ver. 37.

3. St. *John* did alſo *prepare the way of Chriſt*, by his manner of Life. This was retired and abſtemious, auſtere and mortified to the laſt Degree; and ſuch a Life

Life became a Preacher of Repentance, who thundered out Terrors to the Vicious and Hypocritical. But, when Reproofs and Threatnings had awakened the Fears and Remorſe of Guilty Sinners, and rendered Comfort and Encouragement ſeaſonable to be adminiſtered; *Jeſus* came to declare Pardon and Reconciliation: And it was no leſs agreeable to the Character He ſuſtained, to be gentle, and affable, and courteous. It was foretold of him, that he ſhould *not break the bruiſed Reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax*: And therefore, that he might bind up the Wounds of Penitents cut to the Heart, and blow up the leaſt Sparks of Virtuous Inclination, he ſhewed himſelf eaſy of Acceſs to the moſt profligate, and diſdained not to eat and drink even with Publicans and Harlots for their Reformation.

Matth. xii. 20.

John did *no Miracle*, and therefore found no way ſo fit as extraordinary Reſervedneſs and Sanctity, to gain ſuch Veneration among the People, as might diſpoſe them to believe, that *all things he ſaid* of Jeſus were true. *Jeſus* was to prove his Divine Original and Authority, by *Signs and Wonders, and mighty Works*; ſuch as could not attain their intended Effect, without frequenting Places of publick Concourſe, and mixt Multitudes of Spectators. His Buſineſs therefore was to win upon their Affections by his Charity; to *go about doing good*; and to convince Men from their own Experience, that he came to live, as well as die, for the Common Benefit of a miſerable World. The Complexions, and Intereſts, and Engagements of Mankind are infinitely various; and theſe require as different ſorts of Treatment. The Life of *John* taught Men, how to eſcape the Pollutions of the World, by Solitude and going out of the way of Temptations and Allurements: The Life of *Jeſus* taught them that they may be ſafe in the midſt of Enjoyments, and Buſineſs,

John x. 41.

Acts x. 38.

Buſineſs, and promiſcuous Converſation; that Liberties may be ſo taken, as to continue innocent; and Society ſo indulged, as to be even more beneficial than Solitude. In the Former the Contemplative and Reſerved, the Severe and Melancholy, In the Latter the Sociable and Active, and Generous, the Sanguine and Open, may find their Pattern and Inſtruction. Thus there was a Difference indeed in the Conduct of that Leſs, and this Greater Example; but it was a Difference of Decency, and Order, and Uſe, and great Propriety. It was not only profitable, but neceſſary, for bringing all to Chriſt, that They, who admired the Auſterity of *John*, might come to *Jeſus* for the ſake of His Teſtimony; and that They, who preferred the Social Vertues of *Jeſus*, might come for the Love of his own engaging Eaſineſs. But They, who would ſuffer neither of theſe Attractives to prevail, betrayed their own Perverſeneſs; and left no Excuſe, no Remedy, for an incorrigible Temper. From hence it is, that our Lord mentions the very Matter I am upon, and upbraids the Jews with the Inefficacy of it, under that Parabolical Expoſtulation, *Whereunto ſhall I liken the Men of this Generation: And to what are they like? They are like unto Children, ſitting in the Market-place, and calling one to another, and ſaying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, We have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptiſt came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye ſay, he hath a Devil. The Son of Man is come, eating and drinking, and ye ſay, Behold a gluttonous Man and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners. But Wiſdom is juſtified of all her Children.* Luke vii. 31—35.

4. How *John prepared the Lord's way* in the whole Courſe of his publick Miniſtry, hath been already ſhewed. I add therefore, in the *Laſt* Place, that he did it alſo by his Impriſonment and Death. Although, in the Series of our Saviour's Actions, we are to place all that

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we find related by St. *John*, from the *First* to the *Fifth* of his Goſpel, between St. *Matthew*'s Account of his Temptation, and that of his preaching in *Galilee*; Though our Lord had began to manifeſt his Glory by ſome Miracles, and received ſome Diſciples, and baptized in *Judea*, while *John* continued to baptize *in Enon near Salim*; Yet he did not ſo ſolemnly enter upon his preaching, till the Confinement of *John* made it ſeaſonable for him to come into the ſame Parts, and ſet out with the ſame Subject. For the Evangeliſts are expreſs, that, *After John was caſt into Priſon, Jeſus came into Galilee, and from that time he began to preach, and to ſay, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

John ii. *and* v.

Ch. iii. 22. 23.

Mark i. 14. Matth. iv. 13, 17.

Out of this Confinement it was, that *John*, by ſending two of his Diſciples for the Confirmation of their Faith, made them at once Witneſſes of the Divine Power, and Divulgers of the Fame of *Jeſus* and his Miracles. Thus he contributed greatly to the fixing them in, and inviting others to, the Diſcipleſhip of that Heavenly Maſter, after his Death. Upon the News whereof we find thoſe that adhered to him, and had done the laſt Offices of Reſpect to his Body, immediately repairing to *Jeſus*. And it is probably believed, not only that They were from thenceforth Chriſt's conſtant Followers; but that the more conſiderable part, both of the Twelve Apoſtles, and the Seventy Diſciples of our Lord, were firſt initiated under the preparatory Diſcipline of *John*.

Matth. xi. Luke vii.

Matth. xiv. 12.

But his Death was farther inſtrumental to this end, as it raiſed the Eſteem of *John* yet higher with the Jews, who held him *for a Prophet before*. The Scribes and Phariſees durſt not return a direct Anſwer to Chriſt's Queſtion, concerning

Matth. xxi. 26.

cerning the Authority of *John*'s Baptiſm; for fear of either condemning themſelves, by allowing it; or of *being ſtoned by the People*, if they *ſhould have denied it*. The Opinion they had of his Virtues was ſuch, that Some thought our Saviour to be *John* reſtored to *Life*; and that God had endued him with a Power of Miracles, to teſtify his Innocence and the Wrongfulneſs of his Death. The perplexity this Surmiſe caſt *Herod* into, proceeded from a guilty Conſcience, and a Dread, that the People ſhould revenge upon Him the Cruelty committed on ſo deſervedly celebrated a Perſon. And the ſubſequent Calamities upon Him, and his Family, were generally interpreted a particular Vengeance, for the Barbarity of that Murther.

Luke xx. 6.

Matth. xiv.

Joſeph. *Antiq.* L. XVIII. C. 7.

All theſe Circumſtances are meant to ſhew, that the Death of *John*, as it added to his Own Honour, ſo muſt it in proportion add to our Saviour's; and diſpoſe Them, who held *John* in ſuch Veneration, to think ſo much more honourably of the Perſon, to whom he bore ſuch ample Teſtimony; and to whom he was upon all Occaſions ſo ſollicitous to declare the Preference, infinitely above himſelf, to be ſtrictly due. Accordingly the Goſpels ſeem to ſay, that the prodigious Increaſe of our Lord's Fame broke forth and diffuſed itſelf, immediately after the Death of *John*. A Death, in this yet farther reſpect, fore-running His; as it was provoked by the diſcharge of his Duty, ſuſtained with Exemplary Courage and Patience, and a Martyrdom in the Cauſe of Truth and Virtue.

Thus, after a long dark Night of Ignorance and Vice, God was pleaſed gradually to reſtore Light to a wretched World. The Law and the Prophets, like the Glimmerings of the Twilight, dawned firſt. The Baptiſt, like the Morning-ſtar, gave notice of its approach: And, in proportion as this Diſappeared, clear

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Day came on, and the Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe. God give all them, who live under his Shine, the Grace to *walk as Children of Light*, and in that *Way of Peace*, for the *guiding their Feet*, *in which* he *viſited us from on high*. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, Three Perſons and One God, be all Honour and Glory for evermore. *Amen*.

Eph. v. 8.
Luke i. 78, 79.

St. PETER's *Day.*

An Account of St. PETER.

THE Scriptures take little more notice of St. *Peter*'s Relations, than that he was the Son of *Jonah*, and the Brother of *Andrew*. Whether he was the Elder, is controverted: But St. *Jerom*, and far the greater Part of the Antient Writers, give it to St. *Peter*. *Epiphanius* indeed thinks otherwiſe. But St. *Jerom* expreſly imputes his priority to his Years or Gravity, as the moſt probable Reaſon that can be alledged, for his precedency before St. *John* the Beloved Diſciple in particular. That he was conſiderably older than our Lord, we may with good Reaſon conclude; although the Number of Years, and Time of his Birth, be not known to us. The Place of his Abode, as well as Birth, was *Bethſaida*; where he had been Educated in the laborious Trade of Fiſhing. We have reaſon enough to conjecture, that he was for ſome time a Diſciple of *John* the Baptiſt; being well aſſured that his Brother *Andrew*, who firſt brought him to Chriſt, was ſo. St. *Peter*, being ſurprized with the News, comes full of Expectation to ſee the Perſon, who, his Brother had aſſured him, was the ſame that

John xxi. 15.

Adv. Jovin. Tom. 2. p. 35.

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the Prophets had foretold, the very *Meſſiah*. He at firſt ſight meets with a familiar Salutation, and the promiſe of an honourable Name, with which he ſhould ſhortly be dignified. John i. 41, 42. How long St. *Peter* continued now with Jeſus, the Scripture does not inform us. But it hath been already proved, that this was not the Call to his conſtant Attendance upon Chriſt; the Circumſtances whereof have alſo been ſufficiently ſpoken to. *Goſp. for* v. Sun. *after* Trin.

Our Saviour, being now about to chooſe his Apoſtles, did firſt commend Himſelf and Them to God the Father, and begged his Aſſiſtance in earneſt Prayer. *It came to paſs in thoſe days, that he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God; and when it was day, his Diſciples came unto him. Of them he choſe twelve, whom alſo he named Apoſtles, Simon called Peter*, &c. When the Apoſtles were baptized, we have no good account: But that they were, we have no reaſon to doubt. Some have been ſo fond, as to think our Saviour baptized *Peter* only; that He baptized *James* and *John*; and They the reſt of their Brethren. But this is advanced without any ground, and it is eaſy to diſcover the meaning of it. Thus much we are well ſatisfied of; that theſe Three were admitted into our Lord's more ſecret Retirements, and honoured with greater Manifeſtations of his Power and Glory, than the reſt. But that *Peter* was ever alone ſo favoured, we do not any where find ſufficient Proof. Luke vi. 12, 13.

Jeſus, having exerted his Divine Power, in the feeding Five Thouſand with Five Loaves and Two Fiſhes, from thence took occaſion to diſcourſe of himſelf, as the Heavenly Bread typified by the Manna in the Wilderneſs. At this many were offended, inſomuch that great part of his Diſciples deſerted him; Which he perceiving, aſks the Twelve, *Will ye alſo go away?*

To

To which St. *Peter* with a becoming Zeal replies, *Lord, to whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal Life.*

John vi. 67, 68.

Our Lord, willing to be private, and at the ſame time to make tryal of his Diſciples Faith, commands them into a Ship, whilſt himſelf in a deſert place continued praying. In the mean time a boiſterous Storm had made the Voyage not only ſlow but dangerous. In the midſt of their vain Toils and Fears, they beheld *Jeſus* walking on the mercileſs Element. This put them into a yet greater Affright, cauſed by miſtaking him for a Spirit; He, to ſatisfy their anxious Doubts, makes himſelf known to them. But *Peter*'s Warmth, willing to diſtinguiſh itſelf, deſires leave to make an Experiment of his Faith, by coming to our Lord upon the Water. Immediately, the Waves riſing, and his Body and Faith both ſinking together, He implores help; Which being given, with a gentle Reproof, Both came into the Ship. The Storm, having now performed the buſineſs for which it was deſign'd, forthwith ceaſed; and the Winds and Water with all ſpeed convey them to their Haven where they would be.

Matth. xiv.

Being come into the Coaſts of *Ceſarea*, Chriſt enquires of his Diſciples, What Opinion the People had of Him; and afterwards, What the Apoſtles themſelves thought. *Peter*, their common Spokeſman, anſwers, *Thou art Chriſt the Son of God.* To which our Saviour replies, *Bleſſed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah*, &c. as in the Goſpel for the Day. For the true Importance whereof I refer my Reader to the Comment there.

Matth. xvi.

The Next remarkable Paſſage we find this Saint concerned in, was the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord; when *Moſes* and *Elias* were ſeen with him, and *Peter*'s Advice was, to build three Tabernacles for an abode there. His Words in

Matth. xvii.

ſome

ſome ſenſe were Prophetical; and afterwards ſo far accompliſhed, that, Hiſtory informs us, three Chriſtian Churches were erected in this Mountain. Adricom. Zabulon.

Our Saviour, upon the Approach of his Paſſion, began to forewarn his Diſciples of it; but *Peter*'s Affection for his Maſter, and his Miſapprehenſion of the Nature of his Kingdom, could not bear any Thoughts of that Nature. He ſuppoſed it incredible, that ſuch Affronts and Indignities ſhould be offered to the Son of God. Whereupon he receives a ſharp Rebuke, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but the things that be of Men.* Matth. xvi. Matth. xvi. 23.

After this he is made inſtrumental in a Miracle, by taking up a Fiſh with Money in the Mouth, for ſatisfying the Demands of thoſe, who collected the Tribute-Money at *Capernaum*. This was the Yearly Sum, payable by every Jew, to ſupply the Service and Expences of the Temple. To which, though our Lord's Argument plainly intimates, that he was not obliged; yet he rather choſe to ſubmit to the Payment, than to give Offence, and incur the Cenſure of contemning the Legal Ordinances, by inſiſting upon an Exemption, the Reaſons whereof were not as yet convenient to be divulged. Matth. xvii.

Our Bleſſed Lord, having diſcourſed a young Man, very eager to become his Convert, but who had not follow'd that wiſe Counſel, to ſit down firſt and count the Charges; (that is, to repreſent to himſelf all the Difficulties before he entered upon the Work) was hence teaching his Diſciples, what great Impediments to Godlineſs Riches are, and how unlikely the Poſſeſſors of them would be to forſake all, take up their Croſs, and follow him. St. *Peter* deſires to know, what Reward Their ſo perfect Reſignation of themMatth. xix. Luke xiv. 31, 33.

ſelves and their Fortunes ſhould obtain. He is anſwer'd, that they ſhould meet with ample Recompence; if not in this World, yet however, when the Son of Man ſhall come in his Glory.

The time was now at hand for our Bleſſed Saviour's celebrating his laſt and great Paſſover; he therefore ſends *Peter* and *John*, as Harbingers, to prepare for his Reception. They had exe-

Luke xxii. 8.

cuted his Commands, and he comes to the Houſe with the reſt of his Apoſtles. (Whether it was St. *John*'s, *Simon* the Leper's, *Nicodemus*'s, *Joſeph*'s of *Arimathea*, or whether any of thoſe, there is no Neceſſity of enquiring) Supper being now almoſt ended, our Lord, about to ſhew them an exemplary Proof of that Humility, which he had ſo conſtantly recommended to them in his Diſcourſes; riſes from Table, lays by his upper Garments, (which, according to the Cuſtom of thoſe Eaſtern Countries, were long and unfit for Action) girds himſelf with a Towel; and, having poured Water into a Baſon, comes to waſh

John xiii.

the Feet of his Apoſtles. *Peter*, thinking it too great a degrading of himſelf, eſteem'd himſelf obliged to refuſe the Proffer. Which modeſt Obſtinacy he perſiſts in, till inform'd that, unleſs he were ſo waſhed, he forfeited all Right in his Maſter. Whereupon he immediately and eagerly replies, *Lord, not only my Feet, but alſo my Hands and my Head.*

This Ceremony being ended, our Lord foretels the Conſternation and Fear his being apprehended ſhould ſtrike into them. *Peter*'s forward Temper and moſt affectionate Zeal makes large Promiſes of going into Priſon or Death, rather than he would be guilty of deſerting his Maſter. Hereupon he is reproved by Chriſt, for his inconſiderate, though honeſt, Profeſſions of Kindneſs; And forewarned, how great his own particular Failing ſhould ſhortly be, notwithſtanding the Indignation the former Prediction concerning the Apoſtles

in

in general had raiſed in him; That he ſhould forſake, deny, nay adjure his Lord; and that Three times, before the Cock-crowing. Matth. xxvi. 31, 35. He ſtill, preſuming upon his own Sincerity and Strength, proceeds to engage farther, that he would not only adhere to Chriſt inſeparably, (*I will lay down my Life for thy ſake*; and *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee* in any wiſe:) John xiii. 37. Mark xiv. 31. But that he would do it in a more eminent manner, and even ſtand ſingle if the reſt ſhould be ſhaken; *Although all Men ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Matth. xxvi. 33.

Our Saviour after Supper goes to *Gethſemane*, near which Place was a Garden: Here the firſt Conflicts began. It ſeeming good to Almighty God, that our Happineſs ſhould there begin, by means of the Second *Adam*, where it had been ſo miſerably forfeited by the Firſt. His three Companions, *Peter*, and the two Sons of *Zebedee*, were left at ſome Diſtance from the Place, where he addreſſed himſelf to his Heavenly Father. After two returns, he finds them faſt aſleep; which this kind Maſter imputes to their Frailty, and not to Careleſſneſs, or Unconcernedneſs for the Danger then imminent. His third Ejaculation was ſcarce ended, when the Traitor had conducted his Soldiers to interrupt his Privacies, and rudely ſeize him. The Apoſtles, being now awaken'd from their ſecure Slumber, by ſo diſmal an Object; put the Queſtion, *Lord ſhall we ſmite with the Sword? Peter*, whoſe vigorous Courage always ſpurred him on to bold and generous Actions, not enduring the tedious Expectation of an Anſwer, ſtrikes a Kinſman of the High Prieſt, which happily had no worſe Effect, than the cutting off his right Ear. Our Saviour, willing even then to convince the Jews, if poſſible, of his Divine Power and Miſſion, immediately heals the Luke xxii. 49. John xviii.

Wound; and, with a ſharp Rebuke, commands *Peter* to forbear ſuch unlawful and unſeaſonable proofs of his Love.

Hereupon the Diſciples all fled. But *Peter* and *John*, preſently recovering themſelves, followed to the High Prieſt's Palace; where, at the Requeſt of St. *John*, they were admitted. Now it was, that thoſe mighty Proteſtations were to come to the Teſt; when that Reſolution, which had ſo lately oppoſed a Band of armed Men, trembled at the Words of a ſilly Maid; and That Maſter was deny'd for Fear, in whoſe Cauſe, not many Minutes before, he had hazarded his Life. St. *Peter* retiring into the Porch, probably to avoid more Reproaches, was warned by the firſt Crowing of the Cock; which had not the leaſt Effect upon him. About an Hour after, he is charged again; and the Suſpicion aroſe from his Dialect, or manner of Speech, (the *Galileans* uſing a broader and more clowniſh Pronunciation than the reſt of the *Jews*.) To this Denial he adds an Oath for Confirmation: And to his Third, a ſolemn Execration. So feeble are we, when left to ourſelves; and ſo ordinary is it to heap one Sin upon another, when Men are conſcious of Guilt and a bad Cauſe. It was now time to compaſſionate his Infirmity, and to reſtore his Underſtanding; Which our Saviour, at the ſecond Crowing of the Cock, did ſo effectually awaken, by a gracious Chiding-Look; that the Penitent was ſenſible of his heinous Offence, and ſo deeply ſorry for it, as immediately to flee out of the Houſe, that he might give his Grief the vent it deſired; that of deep Sighs, and bitter Tears of Repentance.

Matth. xxvi. 69,—74.

Luke xvii. 61.

Whether he followed our Saviour through the other Stages of his Paſſion, we have not any Account from Holy Writ. That he was firſt of all the Apoſtles, honoured with a Sight of our Lord after his Reſurrection,

on, we are told by St. *Paul*; and St. *Luke*, who relates the Appearance to the Diſciples at *Emmaus*, ſeems to intimate as much. An infinite Demonſtration of Mercy and Goodneſs this was, To afford his afflicted Diſciple ſuch early Comforts for that Sorrow, which the Remembrance of his Sin had produced. After having appeared to the Twelve at *Jeruſalem*, they begin their Journey into *Galilee*: whether he had lately commanded them to betake themſelves, in order to converſing with him. This, it is highly probable, they might defer upon the Account of their Fears: Thoſe being now baniſhed by frequent Interviews, they ſet forward; and *Peter*, *James* and *John*, *Thomas* and *Nathanael*, being by the Sea of *Tiberias*, betook themſelves to their old Trade of Fiſhing. After many fruitleſs Endeavours, they beheld upon the Shore a Perſon, probably in the Habit of a Traveller, who adviſed them to caſt the Net on the right ſide of the Ship. Which when they had done, and incloſed a great Number of Fiſhes, St. *John*, remembring the former Miracle in the like Nature at their firſt calling, cryed out, *It is the Lord.* Theſe Words inſpired new Vigour into *Peter*, who, impatient to approach his dear Maſter, caſts himſelf into the Sea and ſwims to Shore. There he finds a Fire and Fiſh thereon: Which notwithſtanding *Jeſus* rejected, and required ſome of the Draught. After Dinner he applies himſelf more particularly to *Peter*, and three times aſks the Queſtion, *Loveſt thou me?* Adding each time this Command, *Feed my Sheep.* This Queſtion, ſo often repeated, muſt needs be very afflicting to *Peter*, ſince his Fall. Which having created in him a more meek Temper, and increaſed his Humility; he does not now prefer himſelf

1 Cor. xv. 5.

Luke xxiv. 33, 34.

John xxi. 2, 3.

Ver. 4. 5.

Ver. 6.

Ver. 7.

Ver. 9, 10.

Ver. 15, &c.

to his Brethren, no not even when *Jeſus* aſked, *Loveſt thou me more than theſe?* (poſſibly in Alluſion to his profeſſing, *Though all be offended, yet will not I*) but modeſtly declines the Compariſon, and appeals to his Omniſcience, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* Thus was it thought fit, that he, who had ſo ſhamefully denied his Lord, ſhould as oft be obliged to make ſolemn and publick Profeſſions of his Love and Reverence for him; Each Anſwer being a kind of Reparation for his former Offence.

Luke xxiii. 50, 51. Our Saviour, after forty Days, brings his Diſciples to *Bethany*. There, having given them all his ſolemn Bleſſing, and promiſed them the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit, and the Teſtimony of Miracles, he was taken into Heaven; whilſt They full of Joy and Wonder returned to *Jeruſalem*, praiſing God. Thus far of St. *Peter*, during our Bleſſed Lord's abode upon Earth.

Luke xxiv. 52, 53. Acts i. 12—14.

The Next Occaſion that preſents him to us, is the Election of a new Apoſtle inſtead of *Judas*. *Peter*, being the Mouth of this Aſſembly, introduces the Choice, by ſhewing the Neceſſity of another Witneſs of the Reſurrection, and the horrible Crime the Traytor had been guilty of. After which they proceed, as hath been obſerved heretofore. Shortly after, we read of the Holy Ghoſt poured out upon the Diſciples; and St. *Peter*, upon that occaſion, not only vindicates his Brethren from the ſcandalous Imputation caſt upon that Miracle, by the aſtoniſhed Auditors; but effectually proves the Myſtery of our Salvation. Which firſt Diſcourſe was ſo powerful, as to gain no leſs than three thouſand Souls over to the Faith. The next ſtep made in this Progreſs, was a Miracle upon a Cripple from his Birth. Which, becoming publickly known, created a Jealouſy in the Sanhe-

Acts i. 15.

Acts ii. 14, &c.

Acts iii.

Sanhedrim of the Jews, that the People's Hearts would be won to the Belief of this New Religion, unleſs prevented by timely Care. Having therefore called *Peter* and *John* before the Council, and examined them; they met with Replies ſo full of Conſtancy and Courage, with Reproofs ſo juſt, and Doctrines ſo powerful; that proceed to Puniſhment they durſt not, fearing the People. Therefore, after ſome ſhort Debate, they were diſmiſſed with a ſevere Prohibition to preach any more in this Name. Such was now the Apoſtles undaunted preſence of Mind, that, not fearing that very Aſſembly, who had dyed their hands in their Lord's Blood, and therefore were not likely to be very tender of his Servants; they replied, That ſuch Menaces could not prove of any Force at all to keep them from their Duty; appealing to their very Judges and Accuſers, whoſe Injunctions ought to take place, God's, or Theirs. The many ſignal Miracles done by their hands, daily advanced their Character among the People. And it is not difficult to imagine, with how great Regret and Vexation of Spirit the High-Prieſt and Sadducees daily beheld the Sick in Couches, expecting only the Shadow of *Peter*, as he paſſed by. They ſend therefore the Captain of the Temple, (ſo called, becauſe his Garriſon was (in the *Turris Antonina*) near at hand, to prevent any Tumults or Seditions) to take them again; They complain of their ſtrict Orders, ſo ſoon, with ſo much Confidence,

Ch. iv. 1—3. 13—18. —8—12. —19, 20. Acts v. 11, 12, 13. —15.

* *This commanded the Temple, as That did the City; It had for that reaſon been the Dwelling of the Chief Prieſts, from* Hyrcanus *the* Maccabee *(the Builder of it) to* Herod's *time. But He, ſenſible what Check a good Strength here might give to any Commotions, repaired, fortified, and carried it ſo high, that the Guard placed here had a perfect View and Command of every thing done about the Temple, and were always at hand to ſuppreſs any Diſorders.* See *Adricom.* in *Jeruſal.* §. 29.

violated; The Apoſtles return the ſame Anſwer as before: Hereupon they are committed to Priſon. But in vain do Bars and Keepers oppoſe the Operations of an Almighty Power. The Apoſtles were found in the Temple preaching to the People, and yet the Priſon-Doors all this while ſtrongly guarded. Enraged with a Miracle, which ſhould rather have convinced them, the Jews were now preparing the Sen-

Acts v. tence of Death; when *Gamaliel*, whoſe Wiſdom had made him more moderate than the reſt, diverted them from their Deſign by a ſeaſonable and moſt rational Diſcourſe.

The Martyrdom of *Stephen* not long

Acts vii. after, and the Perſecution immediately conſequent upon it, cauſed the Diſciples to diſperſe, and conſequently the ſpeedier Diſſemination of the Goſ-

Acts vii. pel. *Philip* the Deacon, amongſt the reſt, had been very happy in *Samaria*. For the confirming of which City, *Peter* and *John* were ſent from the College of Apoſtles at *Jeruſalem*. Here they imparted the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, by the laying on of Hands and Prayer. Here they confounded *Simon Magus*, and diſabuſed the People who had been ſeduced by his Sorceries and Blaſphemies. In their return to *Jeruſalem*, they enlightened many places about *Samaria*. During this Interval, moſt probably, *Peter* viſited *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Aſia*, and *Bithynia*, and made thoſe Converts, to whom his firſt Epiſtle is directed. About the ſame time he is ſuppoſed to have planted the Chriſtian Religion in *Antioch*, and to have gone through the places mentioned, *Acts* ix. In almoſt all of which he left ſome ſignal proof of a Supernatural Power, co-operating with him. At *Lydda*, *Æneas*, after Eight Years Palſy, was from Bed-ridden made immediately whole; And at *Joppa*, *Tabitha* was reſtored to Life and ſound Health, after ſhe had been waſhed and prepared for Burial. After preſiding ſome time

time over that Church in *Antioch*, of which he had laid the firſt Foundations; he is ſaid to have been ſucceeded in that See by *Euodius*: Under whoſe Government how glorioufly the Chriſtian Faith grew and flouriſhed, notice hath been taken before. *Epiſt. St.* Barnabas's *Day.*

But the moſt glorious Prize he bore was the Converſion of the Gentiles, begun at *Cornelius* his Houſe, and aſſiſted by the Donation of the Holy Ghoſt. This the Brethren at *Jeruſalem* were offended at, ſtill retaining their Scorn of other Nations; till *Peter*'s relation of the Diſpenſation of Providence in it aſſured them, that he had done nothing, except what he was warranted in, and by a Viſion from Heaven commanded expreſsly to do. This turned their Murmurrings into Thankſgivings, and their Reproaches into Praiſes. We have reaſon to think, that *Peter* continued now at *Jeruſalem* till this Impriſonment by *Herod*; from which, a little before his intended Execution, he was miraculouſly delivered by an Angel. How he diſpoſed of himſelf betwixt this time, and the general Synod in the *Fifteenth* Chapter we have various Conjectures. After the Determination of that Council, *Peter* went down to *Antioch*, and there, by his Practice and free Converſation with the Gentiles, did confirm his Approbation of the Decree which had paſt; till Fear of diſpleaſing ſome Jewiſh Proſelytes cauſed him to withdraw himſelf, and uſe his former Severity. For this St. *Paul*, as himſelf tell us, reproved him ſharply; as having by his Behaviour encouraged that Party, which, not long before, were by the general Aſſembly pronounced to lay too heavy a Yoke on the Necks of the New Converts. All which mightily diſcountenanced the Gentiles, and was an ignominious Practice of Hypocriſy, which St. *Paul* thought he had deſerved to be branded withal. That

Acts x.

Acts xi.

Acts xii.

Gal. ii. 11.

That he was married we know; being expreſsly told by the Evangeliſts, of a Cure publickly performed by our Saviour upon his Wife's Mother. Whom, though ſome affirm that he left with his Occupation, when he was called to the Apoſtleſhip; yet we are told by better Authority, that ſhe accompanied him through all his Travels; And this may perhaps be proved from that Paſſage of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*: *Have we not Power to lead about a Siſter, a Wife, as well as other Apoſtles, and as the Brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?* St. *Auguſtine* ſeems to ſay, that he had ſeveral Children, and ſo does *Clemens of Alexandria*. We are told, even by *Baronius*, of a Daughter named *Petronilla*. His Wife is ſaid to have obtained a Glorious Crown of Martyrdom before him. And *Clemens Alexandrinus* gives an Account, how piouſly her Huſband did both encourage and congratulate her upon that Occaſion.

Matth. viii. 14. Mark i. 30. Luke iv. 38.

1 Cor. ix. 5.

Aug. T. IV. p. 878. Ed. Baſ. Clem. Alex. Strom. III.

Bar. Ann. 60.

Strom. VII. p. 736.

Of his Writings we have none, except his Two Epiſtles. The Firſt is confeſſedly His: The Second we have no reaſon to queſtion his being the Author of, if we conſider, that ſeveral Paſſages in it are by no means applicable to *Simeon*, the ſecond Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*, to whom ſome impute it. Such are the *Seventeenth* and *Eighteenth* Verſes of the *Firſt* Chapter; where he relates the Transfiguration of Chriſt, and tells us, himſelf was preſent at it. So likewiſe the *Fourteenth* Verſe, ſpeaking how our Lord foretold his Death; with many other Particulars, which ſufficiently ſhew the Writer. Five other Treatiſes are mentioned by St. *Jerome*, as aſcribed, but falſly, to St. *Peter*. His Acts, his Goſpel, his Preaching, his Revelation, and a Fifth of Judgment. In which

Euſeb. Hiſt. L. III. C. III. IV.

Catal. Scrip.

which Account *Euſebius* alſo (as to the Four former) exactly agrees, but makes no mention of the Laſt.

Eccleſ. Euſeb. *L.* III. *C.* IV.

That he was at *Rome*, and Biſhop of that City, is affirmed by ſo general a Conſent of the moſt ancient Writers, that it ſeems too great Hardineſs to deny it. But the time of his coming thither is Matter of juſt Diſpute. They who place it in the ſecond of *Claudius*, and from thence infer his preſiding over that See twenty-five Years, are not ſupported by ſufficient Authorities. Much leſs are They, who relate his Martyrdom in the Tenth of *Claudius*. The Occaſion of putting him to Death is generally reported to be, that He, aſſiſted by St. *Paul*, had here alſo confounded the Diabolical Illuſions of *Simon Magus*. Wereupon *Nero*, who was a great Favourer of Magicians, being provoked, (or, as others think, to ingratiate himſelf with the People of *Rome* after firing their City) gave Orders for his Execution. Which the Præfects, in the Emperor's Abſence, took Care to ſee obeyed upon Him and St. *Paul* at the ſame time. The Latter, as a Denizen, was beheaded with a Sword; But St. *Peter*, who had no claim to the like Privilege, was ſentenced to Crucifixion. This, and the Torments preparatory to it, he underwent with marvellous Patience. And, as a Mark of his Humility, requeſted and obtained to have the Body faſtened to the Croſs with his Head downward: As judging it too great an Honour, to ſuffer in the ſame manner and Poſture, as his Lord had. His Body lay buried (ſays St *Jerom*) in the *Vatican*, near the Triumphal Way. And there is no need of adding, with Him, that he is held in mighty Veneration by the whole City of *Rome*.

Pearſon *de Succeſſ. C.* VI, VIII.

Pearſon *Annal. Paul.*

Euſeb. *Hiſt. L.* III. *C.* I. *Hieron. Catal.*

The

The COLLECT.

O Almighty God, who by thy Son Jeſus Chriſt didſt give to thy Apoſtle St. *Peter* many * excellent Gifts, and commanded him earneſtly § to feed thy Flock; Make, we beſeech thee, all Biſhops and Paſtors diligently to preach thy Holy Word, and the People obediently to follow the ſame, thy they may receive the Crown of everlaſting Glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

* Matth. xvi. 18. &c. Acts iv. 8. —v. 15, &c.
§ John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

For the EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE.

Acts xii. 1.

1. About the time of foretelling the Famine, mentioned Ch. xi.

1. *About that time, Herod the King ſtretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.*

2. *James* the *Great*, whoſe Relation to *John* is here added, to diſtinguiſh him from the other *James*,

2. *And he killed James the brother of John with the ſword.*

called the *Leſs*, and Son of *Alpheus*.

3. The ruling part of the Jews hated them, though the Generality of the People are often ſaid before to admire and love them.

3. *And becauſe he ſaw that it pleaſed the Jews, he proceeded further, to take Peter alſo. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)*

4. Sixteen Soldiers had the Care of him, who were to relieve the Guard, by watching four at a time. It was cuſtomary in the Feaſt of the Paſſover, for the People to beg a Priſoner, and not be denied. (See *Matth.* xxvii. 15. *Luke* xxiii. 17. *Mark* xv. 6, 8. *Joh.* xviii. 39.) To prevent therefore *Peter*'s eſcape this way, he reſerved his publick Tryal, till that Feſtival was over.

4. *And when he had apprehended him, he put him in priſon, and delivered him to four quaternions of ſoldiers to keep him, intending after Eaſter to bring him forth to the people.*

5. *Peter therefore was kept in priſon: but prayer was made without ceaſing of the Church unto God for him.*

6. The very Night before the Day intended for his Arraignment and Execution. The manner of this ſecuring Men was, to faſten the Priſoner to Two, and have the Door kept by the other Two, of the Four then on the Guard.

6. *And when Herod would have brought him forth the ſame Night, Peter was ſleeping between two ſoldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the priſon:*

7. *And behold, the Angel of the Lord came upon him and a light ſhined in the priſon: And he ſmote Peter on the ſide, and raiſed him up, ſaying, Ariſe up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.*

8. *And*

8. And the Angel ſaid unto him, Gird thyſelf, and bind on thy ſandals: And ſo he did. And he ſaith unto him, Caſt thy garments about thee, and follow me.

9. And he went out and followed him, and wiſt not that it was true which was done by the Angel: but thought he ſaw a viſion.

9. He obeyed the Orders, but all the while miſtook the whole thing, for a ſtrong Impreſſion upon his Fancy.

10. When they were paſt the firſt and the ſecond ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and paſſed on through one ſtreet: and forthwith the Angel departed from him.

11. And when Peter was come to himſelf, he ſaid, Now I know of a ſurety that the Lord hath ſent his Angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

10, 11. At laſt *Peter* recollected himſelf, and finding the whole Tranſaction real, took care to perfect that Deliverance, which God had put in his Power by the Miniſtry of his Angel; whoſe Aſſiſtance was now no longer neceſſary.

COMMENT.

THE Other Matters concerned in this Day's Solemnity, requiring more than ordinary Enlargement, I ſhall contract myſelf here. It ſhall therefore ſuffice, only to ſuggeſt ſome Obſervations ariſing from hence, upon which if my Reader deſire to employ his Thoughts, he may do it to good purpoſe, by turning to the Place's referr'd to, in the foregoing parts of this Work.

Now, *Firſt*, We have in This, as in a Former *Herod*, a Tragical Inſtance of the Abuſe of Power; and of the Mercileſs Cruelty, into which Rulers and Great Men are betray'd; when once they let go the Reins of Juſtice, and become unſteady in the Meaſures of Government, for the Sake of Envy, Ambition, Jealouſy, Partiality, or any other corrupt Paſſion whatſoever.

2. Of all thoſe Paſſions this Scripture points us out one of the moſt dangerous, Affectation of Popularity and Applauſe. With this the deadly Poiſon is generally gilded, by thoſe who would inſinuate Miſchief, and perſuade to wicked, becauſe acceptable, Methods.

It

Ver. 3. It was, becauſe the Death of *James* pleaſed *the People*, that *Herod proceeded farther to take Peter alſo.* Nor is this any great matter of Wonder: For the Humours of the People are ſo extravagant, and their Expectations ſo unreaſonable, that whoſoever takes his Directions from thence is the greateſt of Slaves. A Prince may ſee this, and repent too late, and wiſh to retrieve his Liberty; but, except Reſolution, aſſiſted by the Grace of God and Truſt in his Protection and Aſſiſtance, break this Chain; he will certainly miniſter Occaſion for That, which is my

3. *Third* Obſervation: The Danger and Miſery of going paſt Retreat, loſing all Remorſe, and falling from one Wickedneſs to another. *Herod* firſt vexed ſome private Chriſtians, then murthered One Apoſtle; and after that, impriſoned Another, with intent to give Him no better Quarter. But againſt theſe Melancholy Obſervations the following Verſes help us to ſet another moſt Comfortable One.

Ver. 5. *to* 11.

4. The Wiſdom, I mean, and Goodneſs of that ever-watchful Providence, by which the evil Deſigns of ſuch wicked Men are diſappointed, and his faithful Servants wonderfully preſerved from them. Concerning all which Particulars, ſee the Comment on the Goſpel for *Innocents Day*, Vol. I.

5. The *Fifth* Verſe inſtructs us, how inſtrumental the Interceſſions of good People are towards procuring ſuch Deliverances. Mighty indeed is the Efficacy of Prayer, when unanimous and publick; eſpecially, if the Subject-matter of it be ſomewhat eminently ſerviceable to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of Religion. This may be ſeen at large in the Comments on the Goſpel for St. *Philip* and *James:* And on the Epiſtle for XXI. *Sunday* after *Trinity*, Vol. III. Pag. 574.

6. But if thoſe Prayers be not preſently ſucceſsful, the Caſe of St. *Peter* forbids us to deſpair. *Prayer*

was

was made without ceaſing of the Church to God for him; but the Angel was not ſent for his Releaſe, till the very Night before his intended Execution. Thus it is uſual with God, for the clearer Illuſtration of his Mercy and Power, for the Exerciſe of his Servants in Faith and Patience, and for other excellent Ends, to forbear the Interpoſition of extraordinary Means, till Human Helps and Hopes are given over. This Topick is largely diſcourſed on in the Comment on the Goſpel for II. *Sunday* in *Lent*, and XVI. after *Trinity*. *Ver.* 5. 6.

7. As the Seaſon proper for miraculous Operations is, when ordinary Methods prove vain; So when ſuch, otherwiſe inextricable, Difficulty is over, that Seaſon is at an end; and we are left to the uſe of common Means, and the Protection of a common Providence again. Thus our Lord commands *Jairus* to preſerve the Life of his Daughter, by the uſual Refreſhments of Nature, which nothing leſs than an Almighty Power had, or could have reſtored. And thus the Angel here, after knocking off St. *Peter*'s Chains, unlocking the Priſon Doors, and cauſing the City-Gate to open of its own accord, leaves him, when thus ſet at large, to provide for himſelf. A plain Inſtance of our Duty, to be diligent in the uſe of Means, when put into our hands; and not to expect, thoſe things ſhould be done without us, which, by the due uſe of Prudence and Induſtry, we are ſufficiently qualified to do for ourſelves. See Comment on the Goſpel for St. *Philip* and *James*. Luke viii. 55. *Ver.* 7, 8, 9, 10.

The

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE.

Matt. xvi. 13:

13. Jesus, being alone with his Disciples, took occasion to examine into their Proficiency, by asking the People's Opinion concerning his own Quality and Original.

13, *WHen Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*

14. To this Each returned such an account, as he had heard from Men, divided in their Judgments above him.

14. *And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.*

15. This Question was chiefly meant to introduce the following one, which was, What Notion they themselves had of him.

15. *He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*

16. To which *Peter* (whose single Answer was sufficient, when the whole Company were agreed, and had but one thing to say) replied, Thou art the Promised Messiah, the Natural and Very Son of God.

16. *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the son of the living God.*

17. Hereupon our Lord pronounces a Blessing upon Him, (and in Him upon Them, whose Sense, and in whose Name, he spoke) declaring this to be a Truth, not discoverable by Human Reason, or established upon Human Testimony; but taught and confirmed by the Attestation of God himself.

17. *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

18. See the Comment.

18. *And I say also unto thee, that Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

19. This Church thou shalt have Power to let into, and to shut out from, by declaring the proper Conditions of Membership, by due Administration of Sacraments, and by the exercise of Discipline and Censures appointed for that purpose.

19. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

COMMENT.

COMMENT.

THAT I may not be juſtly accuſed of derogating from the Honours of right belonging to the Apoſtle of this Day, it may not be amiſs to explain and vindicate ſome Paſſages in the Paraphraſe, which relate to him.

1. I ſuppoſe St. *Peter*, at the *ſixteenth* Verſe, to have ſpoken the Senſe, and in the Name, of his Brethren. I do ſo, becauſe the Queſtion was put to them all in common; as is evident from *Ver* 15. Becauſe they were All agreed in the ſame Judgment, and ſo the Anſwer of One only was needful: And becauſe there are ſome Reaſons for *Peter* being that one, rather than any of the Reſt.

1. That the Apoſtles all knew and believed the great Truth confeſſed here by St. *Peter*, no Man, I think, can reaſonably deny; who calls to mind the Declaration made of it before, by *John* the Baptiſt; Or the Acknowledgments of *Andrew* and *Nathaniel* to the ſame Effect; Or the Belief of all the Diſciples in that Divine *Glory*, which by his Miracle of the Water made Wine he is ſaid to have *manifeſted*; Or the ſolemn Thanks returned to his Father, for revealing to theſe *Babes* the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, (of which this is the firſt and principal;) Or the Confeſſions extorted from Evil Spirits diſpoſſeſſed before their Eyes, and over whom They alſo had received Power; Or Thoſe voluntarily made by the Sailors and Paſſengers in the Ship with him, upon Rebuking the Wind and the Sea; Or, laſtly, That, allowed on all Hands to have been long ago made in the Name of the whole Fraternity, *We*

John i. 34.
Ibid. Ver. 40, 41, 49.
Chap. ii. 11.
Matt. xi. 25.
Mark iii. 15.
Matth. xiv. 33.

John vi. 69. *believe and are ſure, that thou art that Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* Theſe Inſtances abundantly expoſe the Vanity of Them, who would perſuade us, that this was a Truth now imparted to St. *Peter* alone, by peculiar and immediate Revelation; and that the reſt ſtood ſilent, becauſe this was a Myſtery above their reach: Theſe again juſtify the Interpretation current with the Fathers, who, upon this Occaſion, ſpeak of St. *Peter* as the *common Mouth*, the *Tongue*, the Foreman, the Suſtainer of the Perſons, of all the Apoſtles, and the like.

Ambr. L. VI. *in* Luc. C. 9.

Chryſoſt. Matth. xvi. 15.

Acts i. 15.

2. Not content with barely delivering this Opinion, The Fathers ſometimes proceed to aſſign Reaſons for it. As, *That* Decency required but one to ſpeak for All, that Confuſion and Diſorder might be avoided: *That* this denoted the Unity, which then was, and always ought to be, among the Apoſtles; and indeed among all, whom this Confeſſion makes Members of the Chriſtian Church. And,

3. That the probable Reaſons of St. *Peter* being the Perſon are, Either the Natural Fervour of his Temper and Behaviour; Or his Age; Or his being the firſt called to a conſtant Attendance upon Chriſt; Or that Priority of Place and Order, in which we find him in the Catalogue of the Twelve Apoſtles. Any, or all of which will account for his delivering the Judgment of the Company; and may diſpoſe reaſonable Men to think his Confeſſion the common Voice of All, to a Queſtion which had evidently been propounded to them all.

If this be ſo; then ſure no Blame can be laid on extending the Bleſſedneſs pronounced at the *ſeventeenth* Verſe, ſo as to allow ſome ſhare in it to Them, in whoſe behalf St. *Peter* ſpoke. For if this were an *Encomium* of that Confeſſion, and the manner of attaining to it; They, who had a part in the One, ought not

to

to be denied their Proportion in the Other. The leſs, becauſe that Authority promiſed to St. *Peter*, as a Reward of this Faith here, is in the very ſame Words promiſed to all the Apoſtles in the *eighteenth* of this Goſpel: And it was alſo actually conferred on Him and Them together, immediately after our Lord's riſing again, in a manner, that carries not the leaſt Appearance of Diſtinction, or Pre-eminence in Authority, to any of the whole Number. John xx. 22, 23.

And yet it was very proper, that the Anſwer returned by our Lord, ſhould be directed to St. *Peter* in particular; As it concerned Words ſpoken by Him alone; As his Name (given, probably, to intimate that Firmneſs our Lord foreſaw in his Faith) was a fit Alluſion to the Firmneſs of that Church, which was to be begun by him: And, as He made uſe of the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, in a more eminent manner than any of the reſt, when made choice of by God to be the firſt Opener of this Door to the ('till then ſeemingly loſt and rejected) Heathen World.

There now remains only the *eighteenth* Verſe, not yet ſpoken to: Which I reſerve for the Subject of this Diſcourſe. And, becauſe I would decline, as much as fairly I may, the fruitleſs and unreaſonable Controverſies raiſed from thence; my Buſineſs ſhall be to explain the promiſed Perpetuity of Chriſt's Church there contained; *Firſt*, by ſome Obſervations directing us to the Parties concerned in it; and then, *Secondly*, By Others, that may ſtate the Privilege itſelf.

I begin with the Former ſort.

Now here, *Firſt* of all, It is evident enough, that, whereas the *Church* is capable of two Senſes; and taken in common Speech, Sometimes for a Society of Perſons worſhipping God, Sometimes for the Place ſet apart for the public Performance of ſuch Worſhip; the Word in the Text ſignifies a Society of Men, compacted together into one Body. Conſequently, To that Collective

Body it is, Or to each Person respectively, as a Member of that Body, that the Promise in my Text belongs.

Secondly, The *Building* this *Church* is a Metaphor, frequently made use of in the New Testament; and signifies the doing all those things, either in private Christians, or public Communities of them, which may contribute to their growth in Grace and Goodness, their mutual Strength and Support, their Perfection and Continuance. Thus Men are commanded to *build themselves up in their most holy Faith*; And every one, who hears Christ's Words, and believes and practises accordingly, is compared to a House built upon a Rock. And thus also Christians united together are called a † *Spiritual House*; a * *Heavenly Building fitly framed together*, a *Holy Temple*, and *an Habitation of God thro' the Spirit*. Thus far then we are advanced: That our Lord, by Building a Church, means the Establishing a certain Society of Persons, joined together, like Stones in a material Building, by some common Principles; which should cement and knit them to each other, and so constitute and denominate them one Frame. But, were it not for this Agreement, they would be like so many Stones scattered abroad, or laid in an Heap, without Form or Beauty, or mutual Dependance and Relation.

See Comment. on Epist. for St. Mark.

Jude 20.

Matth. vii. 24.

† 1 Pet. 5.
* Ephes. ii. 21, 22.

Thirdly, The Thing, in which they are to be thus united, is the Rock. And what is that Rock? The Person of *Peter* abstractedly considered? No certainly. For this Construction equals *Peter* to Christ himself; and, other *Foundation can no Man lay, than that already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Now, whereso'ever mention is made of the Church being built upon the Apostles and Prophets, the same Honour is attributed to the Rest,

1 Cor. iii. 11.

Ephes. ii. 20, 21.

as

as is to St. *Peter*; and *Jeſus Chriſt himſelf* is called *the chief Corner-Stone*, in which the Whole centers. Thus Chriſt is expreſly called the *Rock*, and *Salvation* declared *to be had in no other*. Therefore ſome other Conſtructions ſhall be mentioned, as much more probable. Such is That, which ſuppoſes Chriſt to mean Himſelf; and pointing to his own Perſon, in the Utterance of theſe Words, as he ſeems to have done on another like Occaſion, when ſaying to the Jews, *Deſtroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raiſe it up.* Or That, which makes the Faith and Confeſſion of *Peter* the Rock on which this Church was to be built. Or That, which ſays, The Church might be ſaid to be built upon *Peter*, as *the Twelve Apoſtles are called the Twelve Foundations*; becauſe it was begun and carried up by their holy Labours and Zeal. And thus ſome apply it to their Succeſſors alſo in the Chriſtian Church. Not but that St. *Peter* hath ſome Privilege ſuperior to the reſt; as he was made choice of by God, to lay as it were the firſt Stone both of the Jews and Gentiles. The Former, in his moſt efficacious Sermon at the Day of Pentecoſt: The Latter, in the Converſion of *Cornelius* and his Company. But ſtill in theſe Senſes the Faith and Confeſſion of St. *Peter* is of the moſt important Conſideration. For if That were not the Rock itſelf; yet even they, who contend for *Peter*'s being the Rock, muſt allow, that this Confeſſion, and his part in the Propagation of it, was the Occaſion of ſo extraordinary an Honour. And therefore the Inference I am about to draw from hence, is what none, who calls himſelf a Chriſtian, will, (I think) deny me; Which is, *That the Church is a Society of Men agreeing with St. Peter; a Body linked together by one common Band; and diſtinguiſhed by that Character, of confeſſing as He did*, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God.*

1 Cor. x. 4. Acts iv. 12.

John ii. 19.

Acts xi.

Acts x.

Having thus ſeen to Whom the Promiſe in my Text belongs, I now come to conſider the Words themſelves; that the *Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt this Church*; that is, againſt the Believers in Chriſt. This we ſhall find no great Difficulty to underſtand, when once it is agreed, what the *Gates of Hell* here import. Of which Two Senſes eſpecially have been inſiſted on by Learned Men. And, becauſe they are Both of them agreeable to the Truth, I ſhall propound them to my Reader's Conſideration, and endeavour to leave Each upon him, with ſuch uſeful Reflections, as the Promiſe, thus taken, naturally leads us to.

Firſt then, Some Interpreters by the Word *Hades* here, which we tranſlate *Hell*, would have no more to be meant, than the State or Place of Souls departed. And thus the Gates of Hell mean only what the Ancient Poets and other Heathen Writers intended by that *Periphraſis* of this common Receptacle of the Dead, compared to a Houſe or ſtrong Priſon; which is ſtyled likewiſe in Scripture *the Gate of the Grave*. Or if by *Gates* we will have Strength to be meant, then it denotes the Power of Death: And the Importance of the Words comes to thus much. That, although Chriſt have not ſo vanquiſhed Death, as to ſet his Servants and Followers out of a Condition of Dying; yet hath not Death gained a final and abſolute Conqueſt over them that die in the Lord. For They ſhall certainly one Day be reſcued; This univerſal Devourer of Mankind ſhall be forced to give up his Prey: And even the Dead, who believed and obeyed *this Chriſt and Son of God*, ſhall riſe again, and live, and reign with Him, in *Fulneſs of Joy for evermore*. And thus *the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt the Church*; In regard the Members, of which that Body is compoſed, ſhall not continue dead to all Eternity; but ſhall revive a ſecond time to a better Life, and triumph over this laſt great Enemy of Mankind.

Grot. *in loc.*

Iſai. xxxviii. 10.

The

The Promiſe thus expounded is full of Grace and Comfort, valuable to Chriſtians of all Ages, but more eſpecially ſeaſonable and neceſſary to the Firſt Preachers and Profeſſors of our Faith. For They, beſides the ſame Fate of Mortality and natural Decay, common to Them with other Men, expoſed themſelves upon the Account of this Confeſſion made by St. *Peter* here; and aſſerted *Jeſus to be the Chriſt, the Son of the living God,* at the utmoſt Peril of their Lives. Now, What could more conduce to the eſtabliſhing their Minds in this Undertaking, than the Aſſurance of a future State? How indeed was it poſſible for them to have gone through with it, had they not been ſupported by a ſtrong Perſuaſion, that Death could not make an utter end of them; and that, when their Perſecutors had carried their Malice to the very laſt Point, in killing their Bodies, there was one mightier than They above: One, who had engaged his Truth to ſee them well conſidered, and who would not fail to make them large Amends for all they did and ſuffered in the Fleſh?

The ſame Aſſurance is no more than needful, even in the moſt peaceable Times of Religion. For, though wicked Men and Gainſayers do not declare open War againſt the Truth; yet there can never be a Truce between our Carnal Appetites, and the Severities of a Chriſtian Converſation. The Calamities we are ſubject to, exerciſe our Patience, and make Life ſometimes a Burthen, even to thoſe, who in the Eye of the World paſs for proſperous and eaſy Men. But, when we conſider the afflicted and oppreſſed, the mortified and the reſigned, the Conflicts which the Saints undergo, the voluntary Hardſhips they impoſe upon themſelves, the many Advantages and pleaſing Enjoyments they are content to be debarred of, for their exceeding Love of God and Virtue; It muſt be confeſſed, that Men could very hardly be perſuaded to a Conduct ſo reſerved, ſo full of Auſterity; were there not a Reverſion hereafter,

ſo very much to be preferred before any preſent Fruition here, that the mere Expectation of This makes all we can do, for ſecuring it to ourſelves, highly reaſonable. And therefore, we have reaſon to eſteem this Promiſe very highly; as that, which, if well and wiſely applied, would ſoften and aſſuage our Troubles and Misfortunes; would ſweeten thoſe ſelf-denying Duties, which human Nature thinks harſh and hard of Digeſtion; and reconcile us to the Thought and Neceſſity of dying, when we are ſatisfied, that the *Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt us*; that is, That we die, not for ever, but only, like Plants in the Winter, ceaſe our Verdure for a while, and diſappear. Yet ſo, that the Principal of Life remains, though the Signs and outward Effects of it be withdrawn. For we ſhall bud and flouriſh again, more vigorous, more beautiful than before, in never-fading Glories, and an Eternal Spring.

Calvin. *Secondly*, Others contend for the more vulgar and uſual Senſe of the Word, and, by *Hell* underſtanding the Place of infernal Torments, apply it, by an eaſy Figure, to the Devil and his Angels inhabiting thoſe Regions of Darkneſs. Now in regard that in Cities the Gates were barred and fortified againſt Enemies and Invaders, and ſo Places of Strength; In regard alſo that theſe, among the Jews eſpecially, were the Places, where the Judges and Magiſtrates aſſembled for diſtributing of Juſtice, and conſulting what Meaſures were fit to be taken for the Security of the Public; Hence they underſtand by this Phraſe, Policy and Force. And then this Promiſe made the Church amount to thus much; That, Notwithſtanding the Devil and his Inſtruments, Wicked Men, and damned Spirits, are irreconcilable Enemies to the Progreſs of the Chriſtian Faith, and do all they can to obſtruct the Salvation of Souls; yet all in vain: Chriſtianity ſhall ſtand and flouriſh in deſpight of them; and all their Subtlety and Strength ſhall not be able to bring about their wicked

wicked Purpoſes of defeating and overthrowing it.

Here again the Conſtructions put upon this Promiſe are Twofold: As we chooſe to apply it, Either to private Chriſtians, Or to the Body of them, united into a Church.

Firſt, There are Some, who apply it to the Church in a Diſtributive Senſe, ſo that every private Chriſtian may take it to himſelf. And thus, by the Gates of Hell not prevailing againſt Believers, is intended, that Sin and Temptations ſhall not be the final Ruin of Thoſe, who ſtedfaſtly in Practice and Profeſſion adhere to this Truth, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* Now, for the right underderſtanding of this Promiſe thus interpreted, we are to obſerve theſe Three things. Gerhard. Calvin. Theophylact.

1. *Firſt*, That our Saviour does not intend by it an abſolute Freedom from Temptations. For the proper Perfection of a Chriſtian does not conſiſt in never being tempted at all, but in not being led away and overcome, when he is tempted. The Houſe built upon a Rock is deſcribed, with the Winds blowing, and the Waves beating upon it; and the Safety of that Houſe is ſaid to lie, not in the not feeling, or not being ſhaken by Storms, but in not falling, when it blows hardeſt. Our Life is called a Warfare, and the Enemy of Souls, one *who goeth about continually ſeeking whom he may devour.* 1 Pet. v. 8. Conflicts and Difficulties and Dangers await us every where; and this is the Conſideration, which makes our conſtant Care and Watchfulneſs neceſſary. The whole Armour of God is therefore preſcribed us, becauſe enter the Liſts and fight we muſt. But if we can ſtand in the Evil Day, we ſhall do well; and the Promiſe does not pretend to ſooth us with Security, as if the *Gates of Hell* would never attempt any thing to our prejudice; but to ſupport us with Hopes of eſcaping, and coming off victorious

torious at last; by this Assurance, that though they do attempt, yet they shall not *prevail, against us.*

2. *Secondly*, Neither is this Promise of not *prevailing* to be so far extended, as that true Believers should never fall into Sin. We have a mighty and a very cunning Adversary to deal with: One, who will let no Advantage slip; but endeavours by wonderful Address, to turn every Action, every Accident of our Lives, into an Occasion of Eternal Ruin. And this Design is extremely favoured by the Infirmities and Inclinations of corrupt Nature; by which we are, when left to our selves, much more disposed to comply with Temptations, then to resist them. Even They who keep the strictest Guard, are sometimes overcome with Slumber; and either yield to the Importunity of the Enemy, or unwarily take part with him against themselves. Were not the case thus with us, Repentance would not be made one necessary Condition of Salvation. But, because *all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God*, and *in many things we offend every one of us*; for this reason even the just Man is so reputed, only by Faith in the Merits of another, and such, as may be accounted to him for Righteousness. For this reason the Law of Works is insufficient for our purpose; and the Covenant of Grace hath found a Remedy for Them, with whom if God *should enter into Judgment*, and be *extreme to mark what is done amiss*, no *Flesh living could be justified*, none could abide the rigorous Scrutiny. Therefore,

Rom. iii. 23. Jam. iii. 2.

Psal. cxxx. 3. —cxliii. 2.

3. *Thirdly*, The true Intention of this Encouragement, given to each private Christian, is, that, provided such do sincerely abide in the Belief and Obedience of their Lord and Master, they shall not perish nor fall away finally. Although the way they go be strait and rugged, full of Snares and Precipices, yet they shall be led through it safely: Although their Infirmities

firmities be great and many, yet they ſhall be *kept by the Power of God unto Salvation, and enabled to do all things by Chriſt that ſtrengthens them:* Although they cannot pay a pure unſinning Obedience; yet their Failings ſhall be pitied, and their Iniquities pardoned: If they fall, they ſhall recover their ſtanding, rally their Forces again, combat ſucceſsfully; and, being endued with the Grace of Perſeverance, by enduring faithfully to the End, ſhall at laſt be ſaved, and come off with Glory and Triumph. 1 Pet. i. 5. Phil. iv. 13.

This Conſideration, if duly laid to Heart, will animate us in all our Spiritual Encounters. And therefore, when the Remembrance of our paſt Offences afflicts us, and the Senſe of our own Weakneſs and Corruption puts a damp upon our Spirits; When the Dread of ſo potent an Enemy, and the Returns of Temptation coming thick upon us, create ſome Doubts and diſquieting Fears, what may be the Event of all theſe things at laſt: Let us remember, that *they that are for us, are more, and mightier than they that are againſt us*; that Chriſt hath promiſed he *will never leave us nor forſake us*, that *his Grace is ſufficient for us*; for the Divine Strength is illuſtrated and made perfect in human Weakneſs. The Sum of all which, and many ſuch comfortable Texts of Scripture, in ſhort is this; that, if We do Our parts, God will not fail to do His; That He, who hath baffled this Enemy himſelf, can and will render us victorious over him too; and, provided we do not by any wilful Neglect fall from our own Stedfaſtneſs, the *Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt us.* Rom. viii. 31. Hebr. xiii. 5. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Lift up then the hands that hang down, and comfort yourſelves, ye feeble minded; For Your Endeavours, if honeſt, though imperfect, ſhall yet be kindly accepted; Your unaffected Failings ſhall find Compaſſion; and, as ſure as God is true, you ſhall at laſt, though it may be through much Tribulation and

and Hardſhip, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

I come now, in the *Laſt* place, to conſider that Senſe of the Paſſage, which is moſt uſually inſiſted on, as it concerns the Church Collectively; that is, Chriſtians, not in their ſingle and private Capacities, but as they are united into one Body. And then the Promiſe implies thus much; That, notwithſtanding all the wicked Contrivances of Satan and his Inſtruments to the Contrary, Chriſt will always preſerve to himſelf a true Church; that is, He will take care, that there ſhall never to the World's End want a Society of Men, confeſſing, with St. *Peter*, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the Living God.*

Now upon this Occaſion we muſt obſerve,

1. *Firſt*, That, by confeſſing *Jeſus* to be *Chriſt, the Son of the Living God*, is to be underſtood, Acknowledging all thoſe Doctrines concerning him, which the Scheme of the Chriſtian Religion, contained in the New Teſtament, hath propounded as eſſential and neceſſary Points of Faith. Such are, The Divinity of his Nature, his Miraculous Birth, his Dying to ſatisfy for the Sins of the World, Riſing again for the Juſtification of Sinners, Being exalted to God's right hand in Heaven, and conſtituted Judge of the whole World at the laſt Great Day of Account; Together with thoſe other Particulars, contained in that Form of Sound Words, to *which we were delivered* in our Baptiſm. For all theſe refer to the Nature or Offices of *Jeſus*, and all are virtually contained in acknowledging him to be *the Chriſt, the Son of God*. And becauſe all Faith is to influence our Lives, and to prove itſelf by Practice; therefore, by confeſſing *Jeſus* to be ſuch, is likewiſe meant the ſubmitting ourſelves to him, as that Divinity, and thoſe Offices require, living, I mean, in Agreement to what we profeſs and believe.

2. *Secondly*, This Faith and Confeſſion, as I have deſcribed it, is the Mark of the true Church, and ſuch

ſuch a Character, as may diſtinguiſh thoſe who are, from others who are not, of the Church. For the Promiſes of our Lord being the only Foundation of Certainty we have to depend upon, for the Continuance of his Church to the End of the World; he no doubt fulfils them ſo, as that Men may be convinced he keeps his Word. It is reaſonable indeed to preſume, that, after ſo many wiſe and myſterious Methods made uſe of for eſtabliſhing the Truth, God will not ſuffer it to be abſolutely ſuppreſs'd and loſt. This renders the Preſervation of the Church probable, and highly ſo; but it does not give any poſitive Aſſurance of the thing. For, ſince Every Man is liable to be perverted from the Truth; A Society made up of ſuch Men cannot, in the Nature of the thing, have any Security, that they ſhall not All be ſeduced and fall away. So that our Lord's Promiſe is the Security given us in this Caſe. And we therefore believe, that *Jeſus* ſhall always be publickly acknowledged to be *the Chriſt, the Son of the Living God*; becauſe he hath ſolemnly engaged, that thus it ſhall be.

In this the Being of the Church is preſerved: This Confeſſion is its Property, it makes its eſſential Difference; It is That, wherein its Safety, nay its very Nature, conſiſts. Whereſoever this Confeſſion is made, and the Unity of the Body confeſſing it is preſerved, there is the Church. And conſequently, the Pretences to being the true Church are not to be tried, by ſuch fallible Notes, as Numbers, or Splendour, or viſible Succeſſion in the ſame place, or any other Outward Diſtinctions of that Kind; but by the Sincerity of the Profeſſors, and their ſtedfaſt Adherence to the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel. Again, Since every Mark, whereby a thing may be diſtinguiſhed, infers its being diſcernible itſelf; (otherwiſe it can never ſhew us the difference of other things to be try'd by it) hence we may conclude, that this Confeſſion of *Jeſus to be the Chriſt*

Christ and Son of God, will always be made in such a manner, that there ever was, and will be a Church, which may be known to be the true; that is, a Visible Church of Christ, without Interruption, so long as the World endures.

3. *Thirdly, The Gates of Hell*, when the Words are thus apply'd, will most naturally signify those Oppositions to the Truth, by which the free and constant Profession of it is hindred and discouraged. And, since this may be done two ways; Either by drawing Men off, and debauching their Judgments with Erroneous Opinions destructive of the Truth; Or by deterring them from sticking to the Truth, and owning what is their real Opinion: Therefore Persecution and Heresy are very fitly understood by these *Gates of Hell*. Thus is the Malice and the Subtilty of the Devil principally employed; By the One, he labours to batter down the Walls of this Building upon a Rock; By the Other, to sap and undermine the Foundation of it.

4. *Fourthly*, With regard to these, the Tenure of the Promise is, that *they shall not prevail against it*. That is, No Persecutions, how severe and barbarous soever, shall so far deter Men from adhering to this Religion, even in its most oppressed and afflicted State, that there should be no good Men left, who dare to own their Principles, in despight of Threatnings, and Tortures, and Death. Many may fall away, many may be taken off for their Constancy, but still a Remnant shall escape: And, however the Seed upon the Stony Ground may wither and be scorched, when the Burning Heat of Tribulation arises; yet there will be Some on the Good Ground, to bring forth Fruit with Patience, and yield Thirty, Sixty, nay an Hundred fold.

So again, New and dangerous Doctrines may spring up, and spread; and, like the Tares in the Field, shed their Venom upon the Wheat: But still the Wheat shall

ſhall ſtand till the Harveſt, and true Believers ſhall always be found; ſuch as, if not free, from all Error and Corruption whatſoever, are yet untainted with any, that ſhould make them ceaſe to be a Church. In a word, However Men may differ in matters of leſs Conſequence, and how many ſoever may fall off from them; ſtill things ſhall never come to that Extremity, that there ſhould be an utter and total Defection from the important Truths of the Goſpel. So that the Subſtance of my Text thus interpreted in ſhort is this: *That*, notwithſtanding all the vain attempts of Hereticks and Perſecutors, there ſhall always be Some ſo Conſtant and Couragious, as will dare to profeſs and teach, ſo Orthodox, as to hold and continue fully perſuaded of, the great and neceſſary Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion. And theſe Chriſtians, thus perſuaded, thus profeſſing, be they more or fewer, proſperous or afflicted, are the Church in this Promiſe, againſt which thoſe *Gates of Hell* never did, nor ever *ſhall prevail.*

It remains now, that I draw ſome few Inferences from this Explanation of the Words, and ſo conclude.

And, *Firſt*, From hence we learn, what that Church is, to which the Promiſe in my Text belongs. The Term *Church* is of ambiguous Signification. It muſt therefore be of great Conſequence to fix a right Notion of it; that we may not ſuſpect the Truth of our Bleſſed Maſter, nor bring the punctual Performance of this Engagement into queſtion, by a wrong application of his Words.

Sometimes the Church ſignifies the Elect, who are Heirs of Salvation, by virtue of an inward effectual Calling of the Holy Spirit: And, becauſe this inward Operation of the Spirit is what we cannot diſcern, this is called the *Inviſible Church*. Againſt this Church the Gates of Hell do not prevail indeed: But the Promiſe does not ſeem to be peculiar to Them only; becauſe

cauſe it ſuppoſes ſome Marks, whereby we may diſcover, who are, and who are not, the Perſons, to whom it is made good.

Sometimes again, the Church ſignifies that Company of Men, who live in the outward Profeſſion of the Truth, and own the Name of Chriſt any where in the World. Now their Doctrine and Worſhip being open and obſervable, ſuch as they may be taken notice of and diſtinguiſhed by; This is, in that regard, called the *Viſible*, and, in regard of its not being confined to any limited place, it is alſo called the *Univerſal Church*.

Sometimes alſo the particular Branches of this great Body are called *Churches*: as St. *Paul* mentions *the Care of all the Churches*, the Church of *Jeruſalem*, the Church of *Rome*, of *Corinth*, of *Epheſus*, and the like. In this laſt ſenſe, it is manifeſt, the Promiſe is not meant. For thoſe Churches, mentioned in Scripture, having ſome of them revolted from the Doctrine and Worſhip of Chriſt, and being over-run with Errors, and Hereſies deſtructive of the firſt and fundamental Articles of our Faith, it is evident, that the Gates of Hell have actually prevailed againſt them. So that the Univerſal and Viſible Church is plainly that Society of Perſons concerned here. And, ſo long as the Chriſtian Religion does not abſolutely diſappear; ſo long as there are, any where, Men, who continue to hold all the neceſſary and eſſential Points, implyed in that Confeſſion of St. *Peter*, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*; ſo long the Promiſe is made good ſtill. The Candle is not put out; though the Candleſtick may be removed from ſome *particular viſible Churches*, and ſo tranſlated out of One Country or Province, into Another.

2. *Secondly*, This Promiſe does not infer, that the Church ſhall always continue in outward Peace and Splendor. We know, at the beginning, after our Lord's Reſurrection, almoſt the whole of it, the Church Repreſentative at leaſt, was contained in that ſingle Upper

upper Room, where the Diſciples aſſembled privately for fear of the Jews. And Acts i. afterwards, during the primitive Perſecutions, it was only to be found in Deſarts, and Mountains, and Caves of the Earth: Among ſuch Perſons, who, to avoid the Rage of their Enemies, ſerved God, not in Temples and Synagogues, but in ſuch Manner and Places, as the Wiſdom of the Serpent joined with the Harmleſneſs of the Dove, put them upon taking ſhelter in. Therefore the Character of the Church is not its being countenanced by human Laws, and protected by the Secular Arm; It lies not in the Multitude of its Profeſſors, nor in the Freedom of its Worſhip; But in the Truth of its Doctrine, and the Sincerity of its Members.

3. *Thirdly*, It does not follow from hence, that the Church of God cannot err. For as Men may be ſaved, though they be not abſolutely void of all Sin; ſo the Church may continue a true Church, though it be not totally exempted from all Error. All Men, as ſuch, are ſubject to Miſtakes: But all Miſtakes do not overthrow the Being of a Church. Though therefore it ſhould be granted, that no Society of Men ever ſerved God in perfect Purity: yet, ſo long as their Corruptions did not overturn the main points of Faith, ſo long as they held faſt *the form of ſound Words*, and kept to the Foundation; ſuch Errors and Corruptions, in matters of leſs moment, are by no means inconſiſtent with this Promiſe. For the *Gates of Hell* have not *prevailed*, till Error rides triumphant, and draws them all off from the Belief and Confeſſion, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*. From whence I argue,

4. *Fourthly*, That the holding Communion with this or that particular See, or Set of Men, is no neceſſary Qualification of the true Church. For the Truth of any Church lies in the making St. *Peter*'s Confeſſion,

and holding Communion with Paſtors duly qualified, according to Chriſt's Ordinance, to adminiſter the Word and Sacraments to the People. And they, who continue to hold His Doctrine, and this Communion, as before explained; though they may ſee good cauſe to ſeparate from ſome Practices, which they think by neceſſary Conſequence deſtructive of the Faith; are yet truly Members of Chriſt's Church, let them hold outward Communion with any particular Chriſtian Biſhop, or regularly conſtituted Church whatſoever.

5. *Fifthly*, This Promiſe may be of great Comfort to us in theſe wicked and dangerous Days, when Hereſy, and Profaneneſs, and All manner of Impiety and ſhameleſs Wickedneſs, do ſo wretchedly abound. For, thougo the Cauſe be bad, yet it is not deſperate. God may try us, and ſuffer many to fall off; but he will vindicate himſelf and his Honour. Error may ſpread, but it ſhall not prevail: Some Trouble his Church may have; great Diſtreſs, but no Interruption. And if our Sins, which God forbid, ſhould provoke him to let out this *Vineyard to other Huſbandmen, who will give him the Fruits in due ſeaſon*; yet Religion ſhall never be totally deſtroyed, nor can he ſuffer his Truth to fail. But,

Matt. xxi. 41.

6. *Laſtly*, This ſhould be a Warning to us, to prepare for Difficulties and Tryals, and to reſolve againſt falling from our own Stedfaſtneſs. The Kingdom of Chriſt and that of the Devil are deſcribed as two Societies, ever at war with one another. And therefore Every one, who hath liſted himſelf under Chriſt's Banner, ſhould provide for engaging every Hour, and fight manfully againſt Sin, the World, and the Devil. We ſhould all pray moſt earneſtly to God for the Aſſiſtances of his Grace; We ſhould ſeek and love the Truth; We ſhould all purſue the things that make for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another; We ſhould hold faſt to the Church of which we are Members, and not content

content ourſelves with believing, but be ſure to live up to what we are taught. Always remembring, that, ſo long as we continue Honeſt Enquirers, Zealous Profeſſors, and Holy Livers, though God may ſuffer us in ſome Points to be miſtaken; yet his Goodneſs will not ſuffer us to periſh, nor to err fatally: And, that the only means to triumph and obtain the Crown of Righteouſneſs, is to *live Soberly, Juſtly, and Godly in this preſent World*, and to *continue Chriſt's faithful Soldiers and Servants unto our Lives End.*

St. JAMES's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. James *the Apoſtle.*

THERE needs but very little be added upon this occaſion, after the many Circumſtances relating to it, already delivered on the Goſpel for St. *John* the Evangeliſt's Day. He was (as hath been moſt probably believed) firſt inſtituted, with his Brother, under the Baptiſt; and ſurnamed *Major*, either on account of his Age, or to diſtinguiſh him from another Apoſtle of the ſame Name. It does not certainly appear, how he diſpoſed of himſelf after our Lord's Aſcenſion. St. *Jerom* (or his Interpolator) *Catal. Script.* makes him to have preached to the Jews of the Diſperſion; but, that his Labours carried him at all out of *Judæa*, or even from *Jeruſalem* itſelf, no authentick Hiſtory informs us. That his Zeal was very Induſtrious and Ardent there, no other Proof is neceſſary, than *Herod Agrippa*'s Choice of Him, for the firſt Sacrifice to the Fury of the People. Which happening juſt upon his receiving the Addition of *Judæa* to the Dominions and Regal Titles conferred on him by *Claudius* the Emperor; the true way of rendring himſelf popular

and agreeable to the governing part of that Nation, was to ſingle out One, whom his Doctrine and the Succeſſes of it had diſtinguiſhed, and render'd the principal Mark of their Malice and Envy.

Hiſt. L. II. C. 9. *Euſebius*, from *Clemens* of *Alexandria's* Inſtitutions, (a piece now loſt) relates this remarkable Paſſage; That the Behaviour of St. *James*, when brought before the Tribunal, was ſuch as converted his Accuſer. And that He alſo, in the preſence of the whole Aſſembly, declared himſelf a Chriſtian. Incenſed at this, the Court condemn'd Him to Death. In their Way to the Place of Execution, he deſired St. *James* to pardon him. Who, after ſome pauſe, and fixing his Eyes upon the Man, kiſſed him, with theſe words, *Peace be unto thee:* And then they were Both beheaded together. Thus did our Bleſſed Lord, not only verify to this Apoſtle his Promiſe, that he ſhould

Matt. xx. 23. *drink of his Cup, and be baptized with His Baptiſm*; but in ſome ſenſe grant his Requeſt of Precedence in his Kingdom too: In regard He had the Honour to die, firſt of all the Twelve, a Martyr for the Chriſtian Cauſe.

The COLLECT.

Matth. iv. 21, 22. Mark i. 20. GRant, O merciful God, that as thine holy Apoſtle St. *James*, leaving his Father, and all that he had without delay was obedient unto the Calling of thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, and followed him: So We, forſaking all Worldly and Carnal Affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy Commandments, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

For the EPISTLE.

Acts xi. 27. *unto* Chap. xii. *Ver.* 3.

27. *IN theſe days came Prophets from Jeruſalem unto Antioch.*

28. *And there ſtood up one of them, named Agabus, and ſignified by the Spirit, that there ſhould be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar.*

29. *Then the Disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.*

30. *Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

xii. 1. *Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.*

2. *And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

3. *And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.*

Epistles for St. Barnabas and St. Peter.

This Scripture having been paraphras'd and the Matter contained in it been Consider'd already, I proceed to the Gospel.

The GOSPEL.

Matt. xx. 20.

PARAPHRASE.

20. *THen came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her Sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

20. St. *Mark* makes this Requeſt to have been preferr'd by the two Apoſtles themſelves: Either becauſe they bore their Mother company, or becauſe ſhe asked it at their deſire, *Mark* v. 35.

21. *And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.*

22. *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.*

23. *And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

21,22,23. See the Comment.

24. *And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.*

24. This gave Offence to the other two Apoſtles, who knew no reaſon, why theſe two ſhould pretend to higher Honours than they.

25. *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

26. *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;*

27. *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:*

25, 26, 27. That Reſentment our Lord ſets himſelf to compoſe by two Arguments. The One taken from the different Nature of His, from that of the Kingdoms of this World;

28. The other, from his own Example; who ſought no other Pre-eminence, than that of doing and ſuffering more for the good of Mankind, than any other Perſon whatſoever.

28. *Even as the Son of man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many.*

COMMENT.

THE Goſpel for this Day conſiſts of Two Parts. A very inconſiderate Requeſt preferred to our Bleſſed Saviour; And His Anſwer to it. Of Both which I ſhall at preſent diſcourſe, ſo far as the Apoſtle now commemorated ſeems more eſpecially concerned. Reſerving the Reſentment of the other Apoſtles, and what followed thereupon, (from the *twenty fourth Verſe* to the end of this Portion of Scripture) to be conſidered hereafter.

Now here we are informed, that the Mother of *Zebedee*'s Children, together with her two Sons *James* and *John*, entertaining a very miſtaken Notion of Chriſt's Kingdom, beſought our Lord, that, when he ſhould enter upon it, (which they ſeem to think would immediately follow his Reſurrection foretold at the *Nineteenth Verſe*) theſe Two Apoſtles might have the Privilege of being next in Honour to this King himſelf.

Such is the plain Importance of that Phraſe, *ſitting the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.* It being uſual, in the Courts of this World, to diſtinguiſh Perſons of Authority, by ſitting in Judgment, and having acceſs to the Preſence of the King. And among Them again, to give Place and Precedence to thoſe of the firſt Rank and Dignity, by ſeating them neareſt to the Perſon of the Prince. To this our Bleſſed Lord replies, That *they knew not what they aſked.* Their Apprehenſions (that is) of the Kingdom of the *Meſſias*, ſo often ſpoken of by the Prophecies of old, were groſs and low and carnal. For as

Ver. 22.

His

His Kingdom was not of this World: So neither ſhould the Manners and Advantages of it hold any ſuch Proportion or Reſemblance to thoſe upon Earth, as they fondly imagined. Himſelf was not to acquire and poſſeſs this Crown, by Wars and Triumphs and common Conqueſts; but by Sufferings, and Shame, exceeding great Hardſhips, and univerſal Malice and Contempt. And ſince his Servants muſt follow his Example, as well in the Methods of obtaining Honour, as in the Nature of the Honours appointed for their Recompence: He enquires, whether they were content, and qualified to accept the Advantage they ignorantly deſired, upon ſuch hard Conditions.

They with a haſty Zeal, natural to Men eager in their Wiſhes, and liberal in promiſing what great things they would do, anſwer, That they were ready to do and ſuffer any thing, and had not the leaſt Diſtruſt of their own Performance. Whereupon our Lord tells theſe bold Undertakers, they ſhould be taken at their word; and, in proportion to their making it good, they ſhould not fail to be conſidered for their Pains and Fidelity. *Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, Ye know not what ye aſk. Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I ſhall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptiſm that I am baptized with? They ſay unto him, We are able. And he ſaith unto them, Ye ſhall indeed drink of my Cup, and be baptized with the Baptiſm that I am baptized with: but to ſit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give: but* it ſhall be given *to them, for whom it is prepared of my Father.* Ver. 22. 23.

That ſuch is the true Purport of our Lord's Reply, as I have already repreſented, will be yet more manifeſt, if we proceed now to conſider the Terms in which it is expreſſed. Where it will be neceſſary to explain, what is meant by *drinking of our Saviour's Cup*, and what by *being baptized with the Baptiſm* that *he is baptized with.*

For the Former of these; We must observe, that it was anciently the Custom of Great Entertainments, for the Governor of the Feast to appoint to each of his Guests the Kind and Proportion of Wine they should drink. In which he was so arbitrary and absolute, that all the Company thought themselves obliged, neither to call for any which was not thus distributed; nor to refuse or leave any behind, which was brought thus by Order. Hence a Man's *Cup* came to signify in general his Lot and Portion: And some Philosophers have persuaded to this Virtue of Contentedness, by representing God, as the great Master of this common Family, whose Right it is to carve every Man's Proportion; and arguing from thence, what Rudeness it would be in the Receiver, to quarrel at his Measure. This Cup is used in Scripture, sometimes for good, sometimes for evil and unpalatable Accidents. In the Former Sense by *David*, when he describes the Bounty of God, by *his Cup running over*; and the Delight and Happiness he found in his Favour, by calling the *Lord the Portion of his Inheritance and of his Cup*: In the Latter, by the same Psalmist, when he says of the wicked, that *the Lord shall rain upon them Snares, Fire and Brimstone, Storm and Tempest, this shall be the Portion of their Cup*; and threatens such with a *Cup in the hand of the Lord, full of Mixture, and that they shall be forced to wring out the very Dregs of it, and drink them.* And what our Saviour means by it in this place, we cannot be to seek; since he hath been his own Interpreter, in two very remarkable Passages upon the approach of his Death. The one is That in the Garden, where he prays the Father, that if it were possible, that Cup *might pass from him; but if he must drink it, that his Will might be done.* The Other, that rebuke to *Peter* for attempting

Psal. xxiii. 5.

Psal. xvi. 5.

Psal. xi. 7.

Psal. lxxv. 8.

Luke xxii. 42.

ing his Reſcue from the Officers who had taken him into Cuſtody; *Put up thy Sword within thy Sheath. The Cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11.

The ſame is likewiſe the Importance of the Other figurative Expreſſion, *the Baptiſm that I am baptized with*; agreeable exactly to that Text in St. *Luke*, *I have a Baptiſm to be baptized with, and how am I ſtraitned until it be accompliſhed?* Luke xii. 50.

Whether he choſe to call his Sufferings ſo, with an Alluſion to that Reſignation of a Man's ſelf to the Will of God, which every baptized Perſon does in that Act profeſs to make: Or whether, from that Effect of purifying, which his meritorious Death was to have upon Mankind; Or whether in Conformity to that uſual Metaphor of comparing Troubles to *deep Waters*; ſo that the Ceremony of total Immerſion, practiſed in thoſe hot Countries at Baptiſm, might ſhadow out the Extremity of what he was about to endure: Which of theſe Reaſons, I ſay, gave Occaſion for this Metaphor, is, I think, no very material Enquiry. For, ſo long as the Signification of the Place is clear and unconteſtable, the particular Reaſon of this Scheme of Speech need give us no great Trouble. And little Doubt can be made, but the true Importance of the Words is neither more nor leſs than this. That the Sincerity and Ability of theſe two Apoſtles ſhould be brought to the Tryal, by Providence ordering Matters ſo, that they ſhould be conformed to the Example of their Maſter, and ſuffer bitter things for the Honour and Confirmation and great Advantage of the Chriſtian Religion; as *Jeſus* had done before them. Pſal. lxix. 1, 2.

This Prediction, or Promiſe, call it which you will, was literally and punctually fulfilled in St. *James*, to the Honour of whoſe Memory this Feſtival is deſigned, The Epiſtle for the Day informing us, that, when the Malice

Acts xii. 1, 2. lice of *Herod* had inſtigated him to vex certain of the Church, the Storm fell upon this Eminent Perſon particularly. And when that Tyrant killed him with the Sword, then did he in the higheſt Senſe of the Words, *drink of his Lord's Cup*, and was *baptized with the ſame Baptiſm*, that *He had been baptized with.*

Concerning St. *John*, the other Son of *Zebedee* concerned here, Scripture indeed is ſilent, as to the manner of his Death. But, ſince this Cup and Baptiſm imply Perſecutions and Afflictions, even ſhort of Death; The ſame Honour cannot be denied to St. *John*, who, as St. *Luke* informs us, was both *ſcourged* and *impriſoned* by the Council at *Jeruſalem*; and afterwards (as himſelf ſays) baniſhed into the *Iſle of Patmos, for the Word of God; and for the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt.* Beſides, that Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory mentions his being put into a Caldron of Hot Oil, by the Barbarity of the Proconſul at *Epheſus*, under *Domitian*. And certainly, That Man may with great Juſtice be eſteemed a Martyr, who had undergone ſuch Tortures, as nothing leſs than a Miracle could have ſupported his Life under, or delivered him from.

Acts v. 18, 40.

Rev. I. 9.

Euſeb. L. III. C. XVIII.

Thus much ſhall ſuffice for explaining the *Cup* and the *Baptiſm* meant here. But it is of no leſs Importance, to be truly informed concerning another Paſſage now before us: Which is, how our Saviour meant, that *ſitting on his right Hand and left Hand was not his to give; but it ſhould be given to them for whom it is prepared of the Father.*

In the Cloſe of the *Nineteenth* Chapter, to the Queſtion of St. *Peter*, *Behold we have forſaken all and followed Thee, what ſhall We have therefore?* *Jeſus* had returned this Anſwer, *Verily*

Chap. xix. 27, 28.

ly I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel. This Promise of Pre-eminence made to the Apostles in common, did by no means satisfy the two Sons of *Zebedee*. But Their Ambition led them to desire a Preference above the rest of their Brethren. Of this, 'tis probable, they conceived some Hopes, from the particular regard our Lord seems to have expressed for them, in giving them the Privilege of attending him in his Privacies. Thus he made them Witnesses of his reviving the Daughter of *Jairus*; of his Glory at his Transfiguration in the Mount; And shortly after, of his Agonies, when he retired into the Garden to pray, upon the Approach of his Passion. St. *John* is also styled, by way of Eminence, the Disciple whom *Jesus* loved; for which some have assigned this Reason, among others, that he was very nearly allied to him in Blood. To all these grounds of Confidence, which might encourage them to ask such Precedence themselves, they add the Intercession of their Mother; hoping thus to strengthen their Pretensions yet more. But still the Answer is, *It is not mine to give*, &c.

Mark v. 37. Matth. xvii. 1. *Chap.* xxvi. 37.

John xiii. 23.

The Meaning whereof is by no means what some Adversaries to the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour would infer from it; *That* to distribute Rewards in the Kingdom of Glory is a Prerogative, peculiar to the Father alone, and such as no way belongs to the Son. For this Son is that very Lord, whom St. *Paul* calls the *righteous Judge*, that *shall give a Crown of Righteousness to all that love his appearing*. He is that *King, who shall separate the Sheep from the Goats, and reward every Man according to his Works.* But the Design of this Passage is to shew, that those

2 Tim. iv. 8. Matth. xxv. 31, &c. Matth. xvi. 27.

Rewards ſhall not be diſtributed, upon ſuch Conſiderations, and in ſuch manner, as theſe Petitioners vainly ſuppoſed. To which purpoſe we may take notice, that thoſe Words, *It ſhall be given to them*, are in a different Character; Which is a Mark of their not being in the Original, but only a Supplement made by the Tranſlators. So that the *ſitting on the right Hand and on the left*, the Honours and Degrees of Happineſs, are not the Son's to give, in the Senſe theſe Apoſtles fancied; That is, He does not give them abſolutely and arbitrarily; he is not led by Partiality and Fondneſs, or Reſpect of Perſons; he is not carried by Humour, or vanquiſhed by the Importunity of Friends and Suitors, as Earthly Princes are; But he is limited by the Conſiderations of Equity and ſtrict Juſtice; from which it can never be conſiſtent with the Perfections of his Nature to depart. This then is the Purport of the Words. *To ſit on my right Hand and on my left is not mine to give, but*, or except, to them alone, *for whom it is prepared of my Father.* And, ſince we are ſo perfectly aſſured, both from the Nature of God, and from expreſs Revelation, that *every Man ſhall at the laſt Day receive according to the things done in his Body*; It follows, that theſe are *prepared* for thoſe, who do moſt to obtain them. That is, Every Chriſtian ſhall then be exalted to a higher Degree of Bliſs and Glory, in Proportion as he hath drunk deeper of Chriſt's Cup. As his Humility, his Obedience, his Sufferings, his Patience, and his meek Diſpoſition, have brought him to a nearer Conformity with his Maſter: So ſhall he be conſidered, and be placed nearer him in Happineſs.

And thus this Anſwer explains and confirms the Parable in the beginning of the Chapter. There the Labourers in the Vineyard, whoſe Work of one Hour had expreſs'd an equal Diligence to theirs who were hired ſooner, were in their Pay likewiſe made equal to Them,

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who *had borne the Burthen and Heat of the Day.* The Apoſtles, and Primitive Chriſtians, in like manner, They, who had the Advantage of converſing perſonally with Chriſt, or who actually laid down their Lives for him, ſhall in no Degree have the Advantage of any other Chriſtians; whoſe Zeal and Diſpoſition, Obedience and Sufferings, have ſet them upon the ſame foot of Fidelity, and Fervency, and undaunted Love of Him, and his Truth.

Thus much ſhall ſuffice to be ſpoken upon the Words, ſo far as they relate to the Caſe of theſe Apoſtles themſelves. But ſince the Anſwer given to Them in ſuch General Terms, is what every Servant of *Jeſus* hath manifeſtly a Concern in; The Remainder of my Diſcourſe ſhall be ſpent in offering ſuch Reflections from it, as may be of ſome Service to Us, in the Performance of our Duty. And Theſe are ſo many, and ſo important; that I ſhall not need to be particular in All, which the whole Paſſage together might ſuggeſt to our Profit; but will confine myſelf to a Few only, which the Words of our Bleſſed Maſter miniſter Occaſion for.

1. And here, *Firſt* of all, We may learn to form a right Judgment concerning Afflictions; and may convince ourſelves, how very wide from Truth thoſe Opinions are, which conclude the Calamities of this World to be certain Marks of God's Diſpleaſure. How uſual is it, when any uncommon Diſaſter befals a Man, to imagine, that ſuch a one hath been guilty of ſome very heinous Crime, which provoked God to take that Opportunity of puniſhing and expoſing him, after a manner as extraordinary, as we fancy his Offence? And, even in the ſeveral Dealings of Providence toward our own ſelves, nothing is more frequent, than from thence to frame very falſe and fanciful Ideas of our being Objects of the Divine Favour or Diſpleaſure. Now, when I diſſuade and condemn this manner of Arguing,

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my Meaning is not, that we are never to look upon Afflictions, as Punishments, sent from God to chastise Sinners, and to give seasonable Warning to Others. For this, 'tis very certain, it well becomes us to do. The Strokes of this Rod are design'd to reclaim us; Which cannot be otherwise done, than by making us sensible wherein we have exceeded. The surprizing Events and dismal Revolutions in the Fortunes of other Men, are so many loud awakening Calls to avoid Their Vices: (where those Vices are crying and scandalous) And in general, 'tis very certain, that all Adversity comes originally from Sin. Nor could the Son of God have suffer'd as he did; had he not been *numbered among the Transgressors*, and taken upon himself all the Temporal Inconveniencies, to which that Guilt had render'd those Persons obnoxious, whose Character he bore. Now, since all Men have sinned, all may in Justice be afflicted. Therefore the utmost my present Argument extends to, is against concluding, not who are, and who are not Sinners; for All are such: But against determining rashly concerning the Degrees of any Man's Guilt, or the Condition of his Soul with regard to the Judgment of God and another World, from the Measures of his Misfortunes and Sufferings here. And in this, I say, we are extremely to blame, and very liable to be mistaken. That it were easy to shew upon Other Accounts; but there is One at hand, with which I shall content myself: And that is, our blessed Lord himself styling Afflictions, and Injuries, and all manner of Sufferings in good Men, *Drinking of His Cup, and being baptized with the Baptism that He was baptized with.*

It may perhaps be objected, that these Expressions, which denote our Saviour's bitter Death, may indeed be apply'd to Such, as lay down their Lives for the Service of God and the Truth; but that they ought not to be extended to Every sort of Affliction and Distress.

ſtreſs. And therefore, though this Argument, and the Comforts of it, may of right belong to Martyrs; yet have not all good Men under hard Circumſtances a Title to them: nor may They ſay, upon the Account of Bodily Sorrows, or Diſtreſſes in the Affairs of the World, that they either drink of Chriſt's Cup, or do any thing to qualify them for the brighter Crown, by ſubmitting to them.

Now in Anſwer hereunto, We are to obſerve, what it is, that God chiefly reſpects and rewards in Martyrdom itſelf. It muſt be ſomething, wherein the Virtue of that Action conſiſts. Now That cannot poſſibly be, Either the particular Occaſion upon which the Man ſuffers; Or the particular Kind of his Suffering; Or the Honour and Advantage which accrues to Religion by ſuch Sufferer. The Reaſon is, becauſe theſe are things diſpoſed of by Providence, and not in the Man's own Power. And that, which is not in the Perſon's Power, cannot denominate his Action Virtuous. It muſt therefore be the Diſpoſition of his Mind; by which he prefers the Glory of God, and a good Conſcience, before his own Temporal Safety and Advantage. It is the Meekneſs, the Patience, the Conſtancy, with which he ſuffers. Conſequently, whatever it be, that miniſters Occaſion for the Exerciſe of theſe Virtues, it makes no Difference; provided the Submiſſion and Self-denial be the ſame. It is ſufficient, that the Cup be bitter, and that it be drunk with Chearfulneſs and Content; though the particular Ingredients, which make that Bitterneſs, be not exactly the ſame. Sickneſs, and Pain, and Poverty, are grievous to Human Nature; and theſe are equally the Appointment of God towards us, as Tortures, and Perſecutions for the Faith. And therefore Theſe are capable of being equally conſider'd, in that righteous Judgment, which diſtributes Rewards, not according to the Quality of the Hardſhips undergone, but in proportion to the Temper and Reſig-

Reſignation of Spirit, with which Men undergo them. Indeed, were it otherwiſe, The Bleſſing of Peace, and a free Profeſſion of the Truth, had been the unkindeſt Diſpenſation, which could poſſibly have happen'd to the Church. Becauſe, upon theſe Terms, Chriſtians had been quite cut out from all Opportunities of drinking of their Lord's Cup; and, by rendring it impracticable to partake in his Sufferings, Providence at the ſame time would have rendered it impoſſible to arrive at a Participation of his Recompence, and of his Glories.

The Objection being thus removed, our Argument is juſt: That, As upon other Accounts no Inference can be drawn, which ſhall generally conclude a Man in diſfavour with God, becauſe he is afflicted; ſo particularly not upon this Account, becauſe the moſt Innocent, the moſt Holy, and the beſt Beloved Perſon that ever lived, was injured, oppreſs'd and barbarouſly treated in the Days of his Fleſh; to a Degree, as much exceeding the Sufferings of common Men, as his Worth and Dearneſs to Almighty God excels Theirs. And therefore we may obſerve, that the Sufferings which theſe two Apoſtles were hereafter to undergo, are not threatned in the Quality of a Puniſhment, but ſeem rather to be promiſed in the Nature of a Privilege. God is the Maſter and Judge of the Race; He is the ſole Diſpoſer of the Prize; And, ſince his Original Juſtice determines him to crown thoſe who run beſt; all the Favour he ſhews in this regard, is properly that of furniſhing Men with proper Occaſions of exerting themſelves, and putting them upon ſuch Trials, as are moſt acceptable to him. Had Misfortunes and Hardſhips been evil in themſelves, and neceſſary Diſtinctions between Good and Bad Men; they could not, in the Nature of the Thing, have fallen upon the Beſt of Men. Becauſe the Greatneſs of them would then have proved him a proportionably Great Sinner. And therefore, ſince His Cup did not deſtroy His Innocence; we ought

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not to think our own, or other Peoples Circumſtances, a ſufficient Mark to judge the State of their Souls by. Rather, when the Hand of God falls heavy upon us, let us look up with Comfort to this great Example. Not doubting, but that as, according to the Conſtitution of his All-wiſe Providence, it *behoved Chriſt to ſuffer*, and thus *to enter into his Glory*; So We are then in the right and ready way to Bliſs and Honour everlaſting. And that the only Danger lies, not in enduring; but in not enduring, as He did. For, if by our humbling and ſubmitting ourſelves, we be brought to the Likeneſs of his meek and patient Dying; Theſe ſevereſt Exerciſes of our Virtue are the Effects of Love and Favour; our Honour, our Advantage, and the moſt effectual Methods of transforming us into the Likeneſs of his Reſurrection and Triumphs in Heaven.

2. *Secondly*, We have here a fair Occaſion given us of conſidering the Reaſonableneſs of Suffering and Self-denial being made the Condition of a Chriſtian's Happineſs: And of ſeeing, that our Lord, in commanding all his Diſciples to *take up their Croſs and follow him*, hath impoſed no more upon us, than every conſidering Man may find very ſufficient Arguments for ſubmitting to. It muſt not be expected, that I can at preſent enlarge upon all theſe Motives, as they deſerve. And therefore I ſhall content myſelf with mentioning Two only: Which, if they be not ſet off in their full Light and Strength, will yet, I hope, by this ſhort Repreſentation, anſwer the Purpoſe I produce them for.

1. The *Firſt*, is the Condition of Human Nature, and the unavoidable Fate we lie under of ſuffering, in one kind or other, whilſt we carry theſe Bodies about us. *Man is born to Trouble*, ſays the Scripture, *as the Sparks fly upward*. That is, Job v. 7. Conſider us, as we now are, corrupt and ſinful; and there is ſomething as natural in our Afflictions, as it is

in Fire to aſcend. For, being thus compounded of warring Principles, ſuch as Fleſh and Spirit; the One cannot prevail, without ſome Depreſſion and Violence to the other. And, our Happineſs conſiſting in the Predominance of the Spiritual part; whatever promotes This, muſt be uneaſy to the Senſual. As therefore our Sins have provoked God to chaſtiſe us, and the Conſtitution we are of, renders all Chaſtiſement for the preſent not joyous but grievous; So does the ſame Conſtitution render it impoſſible for us, either to purſue or to indulge, to deny or to ſubdue, our Luſts and Worldly Inclinations, without Pain and Trouble. If Poverty and Infamy, if Humility and Temperance have their Torment; ſo have Riches and Honours, Pride, and Ambition, and Luxury, their Troubles too. Could we in any ſtate of Life, attain to perfect Happineſs and Quiet; more might be ſaid to juſtify Mens declining to cloſe with Religion, upon the Terms of preſent Uneaſineſs. But ſince this awaits all Men in all Conditions; the Queſtion is not, Whether we will ſuffer at all, (for Suffering is our Portion, and eſcape it we cannot) but in what manner we will chuſe to ſuffer. Whether we will chuſe to be Martyrs in the Cauſe of our Luſts, and the Service of the Devil; Or whether for Truth and Virtue, and in Obedience to God. Whether we will make ourſelves wretched, while Cares and Vices rack us to Death, and our better Senſe reproaches our Folly; or whether we will chuſe ſome Hardſhips, for acting like reaſonable Men and enlightned Chriſtians; while our own Conſciences, and the Commendations of all wiſe and good People, ſupport and applaud our Choice. Whether we will dote upon theſe periſhing Bodies, and glory in our Shame: Or whether we will rather love that part, which is more truly ourſelves; And, by mortifying this outward Shell of us, and expoſing, if need be, our Lives for the Advantage of Holineſs and the Preſervation of

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our Souls, take the moſt effectual Method of ſaving Body and Soul both. This is the true State of the Caſe, in the preſent Condition of Mortality. A Condition, which admits no ſincere and uninterrupted Peace and Pleaſure: and leaves us no other Choice, but that of rendring our Burthen ignominious and unprofitable, or elſe reaſonable, and glorious, and ſuch as, well and wiſely borne, will turn to infinite Account. For, which is yet more,

2. *Secondly*, We have a future and eternal Reward to encourage us in theſe Sufferings. Had Men no proſpect at all beyond the Grave; yet even ſo, thus much might be ſaid to ſhew the Advantages of Patience and Self-denial; that Religion, with all its Hardſhips and Incumbrances, is better ſuited to the Dignity of a Reaſonable Creature, and ought to be preferred far before the bruiſh and unthinking Life of Senſual and Worldly Men. But when the preſent State comes to be conſidered as it really is, in the Quality of a State of Diſcipline and Tryal; That, in which our proper Happineſs cannot be attained, and ought not to be expected: And when that Happineſs ſhall be proportioned hereafter, to thoſe Proofs which Men give of their Virtue, and Fidelity, and Perſeverance, and Chriſtian Bravery here: This puts quite another Face upon the Matter, and caſts the Scale clearly on the ſide of Religion. Immoveable Steadfaſtneſs is then our Wiſdom, in deſpight of all the Difficulties and Dangers, which this can poſſibly involve us in. For, what Compariſon is there between perfect Bliſs, and thoſe empty Shadows of it, with which this World beguiles and cheats us? Between a Moment, and Eternity; And ſure Men never love themſelves ſo well as when they exerciſe that ſeeming Cruelty, of ſelling all, even Body and Life itſelf, to purchaſe this One Pearl of great Price. Sure God is never more kind, than when he afflicts and calls us to Suffering upon a good Account; ſince, in ſo do-

ing, he puts into our Hands Opportunities of ſecuring to ourſelves a brighter Crown of Glory, and nearer Approaches to his own unſpeakable Felicities.

For (which is the *Laſt* Conſideration I ſhall offer from the Words) This Declaration of God's impartial Juſtice, in diſtributing the Honours and Rewards of his Heavenly Kingdom, intimates to us the infallible Certainty of our Happineſs and high Advancement there; provided we be not wanting to ourſelves now, in the Improvement of his Grace, and of the favourable Occaſions his Providence offers to us. Among the many things that may be urged, to beat down our Eſteem for the Honours and Advantages of this World; That is not the leaſt, that they are ſcattered promiſcuouſly, without a ſtrict regard to the Qualifications and Deſerts of the Poſſeſſors. Birth, and Fortune, and Friends, and Importunity, and, which is ſtill worſe, Flattery, and Fraud, and ſinful Compliances, are very often the Steps and Inſtruments, whereby Men riſe, and recommend themſelves to the higheſt and moſt gainful Promotions. And nothing is a more fatal Check to Induſtry and Virtue, than the very great Uncertainty, whether true Merit ſhall ever be conſidered at all. Now here this beſt and moſt quickning Spur to doing well is ſecured to us, that God will reward every Man *according to his Works*: Nay, which is more, that he will reward the Man's Diſpoſition, and the Sincerity of his Intentions and Endeavours, though he may not have been able actually to accompliſh all that he wiſhed and laboured hard to do. In our Great Concern there ſhall be no reſpect of Perſons; So that every Man's Fortunes are (as it were) put into his own Power, and he who fails of Happineſs, hath none but himſelf to blame for it. Were this the Caſe on Earth, how would it quicken our Diligence? And, ſhall our Zeal be leſs than Theirs, who ſtrive for a Corruptible Crown, when We ſtrive for an Incorruptible? Oh no! Let us (as the Apoſtle of this

Day

Day did) *follow Christ without delay*, and *forsaking all Carnal and Worldly Affections be evermore ready to obey his Commandments*, and the Prize shall be our own. And if he command us to *drink of his Cup*, and to *be baptized with the Baptism that he was baptized with*; yet even then let us contentedly and thankfully comply with that Call; and, looking up to the Joy that is set before us, esteem it a Privilege to be conformed to the Likeness of his Sufferings. For we know most assuredly, that, if we continue *stedfast, immoveable, and always abound in the Work of the Lord*, we shall be considered accordingly, and no part of our *Labour shall be in vain in the Lord.* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

St. BARTHOLOMEW's *Day.*

A short Account of St. Bartholomew.

THAT the first Syllable of this Apostle's Name signifies *a Son* is evident, from *Bartimæus* being interpreted the Son of *Timæus*; and *Simon Peter*, who is called *Barjona* in one Evangelist, called *Simon* Son of *Jonas* in another. The Name then given here to this Apostle, is not his Proper, but Patronymical Name; and imports only the Son of *Tholomew*, or *Tolmai*. That among the Jews there were Persons so called, is evident from *Josephus*; who mentions one such, very notorious in his own Time. So that we are still at a loss for his Personal Name, unless that Conjecture may be thought sufficiently grounded, that this was indeed no other than *Nathanael*. To that purpose it is remarkable, *First*, That, as no other Evangelist makes mention of

Mark x. 46. Matth. xvi. 17. John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

Antiq. L. XX. C. 1.

Nathanael, ſo neither does St. *John*, who mentions Him, ever once make mention of *Bartholomew*. *Secondly*, That, in the Catalogue of the Apoſtles, (the giving which is the only Occaſion of naming St. *Bartholomew* in the reſt,) *Philip* and He are conſtantly coupled together; and thoſe Pairs are thought to join the Perſons as ſent together *two by two*, upon the Power of Miracles firſt committed to them. Very fit Companions, ſuppoſing *Nathanael* the Man, whom *Philip*, it is plain, had Intimacy with, and was the firſt Inſtrument of bringing to *Jeſus*. Again, He is, by St. *John*, named in Company with ſeveral other Apoſtles, and ſo, that we have reaſon to conclude him one of the Twelve: For it is upon our Lord's ſhewing himſelf at the Sea of *Tiberias*, after his Reſurrection. This the Evangeliſt declares to be the *third time* of his doing ſo. But the two former Appearances are expreſſly recorded to be made to the *Eleven*: The Reſt named here are of that Number; The word *Diſciples* muſt in all Reaſon be reſtrained, as to ſignify the ſame Perſons here, as in the former Accounts. Conſequently, it is highly probable, I had almoſt ſaid evident, that *Nathanael* was one of the Twelve Apoſtles. Which will be very hard to account for, otherwiſe than by taking the ſame Perſon to be meant by St. *John*, under *Nathanael* his Proper Name, and in the other Goſpels, under his Patronymical, of *Bartholomew*.

Matth. x. 3. Luke vi. 14. Mark vi. 7. John i. 45, &c.

Ch. xxi. 2.

Ver. 14.

John xx. 23, 24, 28.

By our Lord's Diſcourſe and His, in the *Firſt* of St. *John*, he ſeems to have been ſkilled in the Law, and is thought by St. *Auguſtine* a Doctor of it. His Knowledge in this way was rightly employed; Such as received a noble Commendation of Sincerity, made Acknowledgments of the *Meſſiah*, becoming a Man of

Tract. in Joan. VII. John i. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.

that

that Character, and was honoured with Promiſes of future and more ample Diſcoveries of our Bleſſed Saviour's Glories.

His Preaching was employed in *India*, *Lycaonia*, and the Greater *Armenia*. But in what Order he travelled theſe Countries, is not agreed. The Evidence of his being in *India* we have in *Euſebius*, who ſays, that *Pantænus* of *Alexandria*, carried thither by his Zeal to propagate the Faith, found among the People St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel in Hebrew; that This had been left there by St. *Bartholomew*, and was preſerved with great Care, as a moſt valuable Treaſure. This *India* is by St. *Jerom* called the *Fortunate*, and by *Socrates* diſtinguiſhed to be that lying next *Ethiopia*. He adds, that in the Diſtribution of the World among the Apoſtles, this part fell to St. *Bartholomew*'s Lot. Some will have it, that he came at laſt to, and finiſhed his Courſe in, this Country. *Chryſoſtom* calls him the Inſtructor and Civilizer of the *Lycaonians*. He is alſo ſaid to have ſuffered with *Philip* at *Hierapolis*, under the Rage of the People; but, eſcaping with Life, to have taken care for burying his old Friend's Body there. St. *Jerom* is expreſs, that he died, and was buried, at *Albanopolis*, a City of the Greater *Armenia*. And the Leſſon in the *Roman* Breviary ſays, that, after having converted many in thoſe parts, particularly *Polymius* the King, and his Wife, and proſelyted twelve Cities: The Prieſts enraged at his Succeſſes, incenſed *Aſtyages* the King's Brother ſo againſt him, that, having got St. *Bartholomew* into his Hands, he had him flayed, and then beheaded; Others ſay, crucified. Sufferings ſo exquiſite render the Goſpel for the Day exceeding proper to be read, when a Saint, expiring under them, is commemorated.

Hiſt. L. V. C. 10.

Hieron. *Catal.* Socr. *Hiſt.* I. C. 19.

Hom. *in* 12 *Apoſt.* *Dr.* Cave.

Catal. Script.

The COLLECT.

O Almighty and everlasting God, who didſt give to thine Apoſtle *Bartholomew* Grace, truly to believe and to preach thy Word; Grant, we beſeech thee, unto thy Church, to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the ſame, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

For the EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE. Acts v. 12.

12. Inſomuch that they aſſembled openly at the Temple, without any Moleſtation,

13. The Twelve in the mean while being held in ſuch Veneration, that none of an inferior Character preſumed to conſort with them,

12. *BY the hands of the Apoſtles were many ſigns and wonders wrought among the People. (And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.*

13. *And of the reſt durſt no man join himſelf to them; but the people magnified them.*

14. *And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.*

15. *Inſomuch that they brought forth the ſick into the ſtreets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the leaſt, the ſhadow of Peter paſſing by, might overſhadow ſome of them.*

16. *There came alſo a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jeruſalem, bringing ſick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean ſpirits; and they were healed every one.*

COMMENT.

THE Topic properly ariſing from hence, is the Efficacy of Miracles, to eſtabliſh the Authority of the Workers, and to convince the Unbelieving. Which having been handled heretofore, my Reader is referred to *Vol.* II. *p.* 61. *&c.*

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE. Luke xxii. 24.

24, 25, 26, 27. See the Paraphraſe on the Goſpel for St. *James*'s Day.

24. *AND there was alſo a ſtriſe among them, which of them ſhould be accounted the greateſt.*

25. *And*

25. *And he said unto them. The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors.*

26. *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.*

28. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*

29. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me:*

30. *That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

28, 29, 30. See the Comment.

COMMENT.

THE Contention between the Apostles, related in this Scripture, St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* expressly declare to have been occasioned by that Indignation which they conceived against *James* and *John*, upon requesting that they might sit, the one on our Lord's right Hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom. The Nature of which Petition, and our Blessed Saviour's Answer to it, have been sufficiently explained and considered, the last Festival. Whether St. *Luke* have placed this Strife in the right Time and Order of things; Or whether the Apostles were more than once guilty of such Weakness; are Critical Enquiries, of no great Importance, and beside the purpose of these Practical Discourses, to enter into. Let it suffice to observe the Agreement of all Three Evangelists thus far; that this Dispute immediately followed, upon Warning given of our Lord's Death, and his Resurrection consequent thereupon. A plain Confirmation of the Remark I formerly made; that the Apostles expected those Events to be presently succeeded, by Christ's solemn Entrance upon some glorious Exercise of a temporal Dominion. A Mistake, which was then shewn to be in some Degree refuted, by our Lord's Reply

Matth. xx. 24. Mark x. 41.

Gospel for St. James.'s Day.

Reply to the two Sons of *Zebedee*: And it is designed to be yet more fully exposed, by this Discourse to the whole Body of the Apostles, which falls under our present Consideration.

Some Interpreters have taken pains to acquaint us, what Reasons, they imagine, several of this Number might find, to feed their Hopes of obtaining a Pre-eminence above the rest of their Brethren. St. *Peter*, they tell you, is not only mentioned first; but, upon his confessing *Jesus* to be *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, He received the peculiar Honour of this Answer, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.* St. *James* and St. *John* had been dignified with the Title of *Sons of Thunder*; had been equalled with St. *Peter* by the same Admission to the Privacies of their Master; particularly at the raising of *Jairus*'s Daughter, and his Glorious Transfiguration in the Mount: (as we find them again shortly after this, at his Agony in the Garden.) Distinctions of Favour, which perhaps were made Encouragements to that Request mentioned even now. St. *Andrew* was, first of the whole Fraternity, brought to the Knowledge of Christ, and introduced his Brother *Peter* to him. St. *Matthew* had quitted a very gainful Employment for his Service. St. *Thomas* seems to have excelled the rest in Courage; and, when his Master, notwithstanding the Representation they made of his Danger, determined to return into

Matth. xvi. 16, — 19.

Mark iii. 17. Chap. v. 37. Matth. xvii. 1. Ch. xxvi. 37.

John i. 37—42.

Matth. ix. 9.

into *Judæa*, He exhorts them all to follow his Fortunes, come what would; *Let Us also go, that we may die with him.* (For thus it seems to me reasonable to understand that Passage, rather than spoken in a Sense of Fear and Irony, as hath been argued before.) *Simon* the Canaanite, and *Judas Thaddæus*, might think this Preference a natural Effect of their near Relation to *Jesus* in Blood. And *Bartholomew*, by many supposed the same with *Nathanael*, on account of the high Character given him; the Promise made of seeing Christ's Glory; to which some add the Consideration of his being more learned in the Law, and of greater Quality, than the other Apostles. John xi. 7.—16. See St. Thomas's Day. Matth. xiii. 55. John i. 45.—51.

Such have been the Conjectures (and no better than Conjectures) advanced upon this Occasion. But, whether These or any other Causes kindled their Emulation; Our Blessed Lord does here give his Apostles to understand, that neither their Ideas of his Kingdom, nor the Expectations they had conceived thereupon, had any just Ground in the Nature of the thing. To which end he shews the Difference between the Pre-eminences in Use and Esteem with the Generality of the World, and those peculiar to the Gospel and Their Character. And then he declares and describes the mighty Honours, which were reserved, as a proper Recompence for Their Services and Fidelity to Him. The Former of these Arguments is contained in the *Twenty Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh*, The Latter in the *Twenty Eighth, Twenty Ninth*, and *Thirtieth* Verses.

1. The Words, in which the former Reason lies, are these: *The Kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them, and they that exercise Authority upon them, are called Benefactors. But Ye shall not be so; but He that is greatest among you, let him be as the Younger; and He that is chief, as he that doth serve. For, Whether is greater,*

greater, he that ſitteth at Meat, or He that ſerveth? Is not he that ſitteth at Meat? But I am among you, as he that ſerveth.

Referring my Reader, for the Senſe of theſe Words, to the Explanation given in a former Paraphraſe; I obſerve only, that the Argument contained in them, cannot by any Means be, what ſome have inferred from hence, *viz.* That it is inconſiſtent with the Character and Duty, either of a Chriſtian in general, or of an Apoſtle or Miniſter of Chriſt in particular, to bear Rule, or exerciſe Authority over Others. The forbidding this to Chriſtians in general, muſt have introduced Confuſion and endleſs Calamities; by excluding thoſe from Power, who are, upon their own Principles, of all Men beſt fitted for it, and moſt likely to uſe it conſcientiouſly and profitably. And we cannot imagine, our Lord deſigned ſo great a Miſchief to the World, as to ordain, that none of Them ſhould govern, who, if they act as they profeſs, muſt needs be ſuch, that it were to be wiſh'd rather, and would certainly turn to beſt account, to have it lawful for none but them to govern.

St. James's Day.

Nor can our Lord's Intention be to debar the Apoſtles in particular, and their Succeſſors in that Dignity, from all manner of Juriſdiction over Others. For it is plain, from ſeveral Paſſages in the New Teſtament, that He did inſtate them in ſuch Powers, as are ſignified by the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, by *binding and looſing the Sins of Men*, and the like. It is abundantly notorious, that they did not only exerciſe ſuch Powers in their own Perſons, but thought themſelves bound to delegate them to others. And accordingly the Epiſtles furniſh ſeveral Directions for the Execution of the Charge ſo delegated: Which had been the vaineſt Caution in the World; ſuppoſing the Writers to have no Authority to give, and the Perſons written not to have received, any ſuch Commiſſions. Nay, this Interpretation

pretation is evidently confuted by the very Paſſage now in hand. For our Lord does here, in the ſame Breath, declare that he had *appointed to* theſe Apoſtles a *Kingdom, as his Father had appointed unto Him*; and had conſtituted them Judges in that Kingdom. Unleſs therefore we will deny, that Chriſt himſelf is a King and a Judge; we muſt either allow thoſe Expreſſions to denote ſome Power and Authority derived from Him to his Apoſtles; or elſe we make One part of the Argument urged here, to ſtand in perfect Contradiction to the Other. *Ver.* 29.

From hence it ſeems undeniably to follow, that the Oppoſition between theſe Apoſtles and the Princes of the Gentiles, does not properly conſiſt in Authority, and no Authority; but in the different Nature and Kind of their Authority, and the different Manner of exerting it. Our Saviour, when declaring before *Pilate*, that his *Kingdom is not of this World*; aſſigns that for a Reaſon, why His Servants did not reſcue him by Fighting, as the Subjects of other Kings do, when their Governors are in danger. And, in proportion as the Apoſtles are like Him, ſo are they more and more unlike to other Princes. The Power of theſe extends to the Bodies and Eſtates, but Theirs is over the Souls and Conſciences of Men. The end of That is to eſtabliſh Temporal, but of This to ſecure Eternal, Peace and Happineſs. The Exerciſe of That is generally Tyrannical and Arbitrary; and, though the Perſons poſſeſs'd of it affect Titles, which ſpeak publick Good; yet do they rather import what Princes ſhould be, than what they really are: for the aim of thoſe Gentiles was to gain Eaſe, and Pomp, and Grandeur to themſelves, at the infinite Sufferings and Expence of their People. But the Exerciſe of the Apoſtolick Authority was to be conſpicuous in Humility and Meekneſs, in univerſal Charity, in unwearied Labours, and unparallelled Condeſcenſions; In foregoing John xviii. 36.

and

and despising Personal Safety and Advantage: In spending and being spent, to promote the common Interest of those under their Care; and in not disdaining to become Servants to the meanest, for the Sake, and after the Example, of Jesus.

This I take to be the true State of our Lord's first Argument. And thus it comes directly up to the point, for checking that extorbitant Ambition of the Disciples; which, as was said before, was kindled and cherished in them, by that vulgar Error concerning the *Messiah*'s Kingdom; As if the Distinctions of those that should be chief in this, were to consist in all that Gaiety, and Splendor, and proud Greatness, which the Unbelieving World valued themselves upon.

2. I pass now to the *Second* Argument, which is designed to quiet the Emulation of these Apostles, by declaring, that, although no such Dominion was intended for their Reward, as they fondly imagined: Yet a Reward their good Services should not want; and that such, as had both Honour and Pleasure to recommend it. *Ye* (says Christ) *are they which have continued with me in my Temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: That ye may eat and drink at my Table in my Kingdom, and sit on Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* To clear this Point, it will be expedient, *First*, to explain some Expressions in this Promise, and *Then* to shew the weight of our Lord's Reasoning in it.

Ver. 20, 29, 33.

First then, for explaining the Terms in which this Promise is delivered: I observe, That, by *Continuing with Christ in his Temptations*, are undoubtedly meant the several Instances of Fidelity, by which these Apostles had signalized themselves. Such as, Adhering stedfastly to their Master, notwithstanding all the Discouragements and Difficulties they met with, or saw Him exposed to: Relinquishing the World for his sake:

ſake; Being content to truſt their All with him; to undergo the ſame painful Labours and long Journies, the ſame Poverty and hard Fate, the ſame Malice and Perſecution, the ſame Deriſion and Contempt, which He did. Not taking diſtaſte at any of thoſe myſterious Doctrines, which ſome thought *hard Sayings*, and, as *St. John* ſays, thereupon *walked no more after him.* Not betraying any of thoſe Defects in their Temper, which the Parable of the Sower deſcribes, in ſuch Hearers, who, like the Seed on Stony Ground, were of promiſing and hopeful Beginnings, but brought no Fruit to Maturity: Zealous and forward, while Matters went well; but, as ſoon as Tribulation aroſe, preſently offended. In ſhort, They are here commended for the Virtues of Sincerity and Conſtancy, Patience and Perſeverance. John vi. 60, 66.

Secondly, By Chriſt's *appointing to* Them *a Kingdom*, as *his Father had appointed unto Him*; we are to underſtand not an Equality, but only a Likeneſs, of Promotion. God *gave Jeſus a Name above every Name*; ſo that none could come up to His Degree of Exaltation. *Sit thou on my right Hand until thine Enemies be made thy Footſtool*, was the conferring of a Dignity ſo excellent, that not any of the Bleſſed Angels themſelves could aſpire to it. Nor indeed could Any other pretend to merit it, but the Son; becauſe none but He was in *the form of God*, and *humbled himſelf* notwithſtanding, to *the form of a Servant*, and *the Death of the Croſs*. But, as God exalted this Son for his voluntary Humiliation and Sufferings: So he decreed, that all, who ſuffered with him, ſhould alſo reign with him; That They ſhould partake of his Glories, who had been Partakers of his Hardſhips; that they ſhould receive an Elevation, in Proportion to what they had done and ſuffered for his ſake; though incomparably beneath His, becauſe Their Actions and Sufferings were Phil. ii. 9. 10. Heb. i. 13.

incom-

incomparably, nay infinitely, beneath His. This Difference is here expreſſed, in that Chriſt aſſumes to himſelf the Prerogative of diſtributing the Rewards and Advancements, which the Reſt ſhould receive. He, as God, had a Kingdom from everlaſting; and, as Man, he had a Regal Power inveſted in his Human Nature: They ſhould be Kings and Prieſts to God and his Father too; yet not Supreme and Paramount, as He was; but Kings of His making, and by Virtue of His Blood and Merits, that ſits upon the Throne.

Thirdly, The Deſcription of this Kingdom does likewiſe deſerve to be carefully conſidered. For by *eating and drinking at his Table*, we muſt not underſtand any groſs Feaſts, or Gratifications of a Fleſhly Appetite. But becauſe, while we continue in theſe Bodies, and lead Lives of Senſe, it is not eaſy for us to apprehend things purely Spiritual; therefore Reſemblances of Senſe are made uſe of, to convey to our Underſtandings the Ideas of things above us, by thoſe which bear ſome proportion to us. Thus the Plague of Heat and Thirſt is uſed to deſcribe the Torments of the *Rich Glutton* in Hell, and the ſad Condition of a Wretch, who with ſuch Vehemence implored *a drop of Water to cool his Tongue.*

Luke xvi. 24.

Thus the Saints are ſaid *not to hunger or thirſt any more*; and thoſe who come into the Goſpel, to *eat Bread* with the holy Patriarchs *in the Kingdom of God.* In like manner, theſe Words here intimate a Condition of Plenty and Pleaſure, where nothing that can contribute to true Happineſs ſhall be wanting; but all that Eaſe, and Abundance, and Delicious Enjoyment ſhall he had, which anſwers to the Condition of Men, who live and eat with Princes, and partake of all their State and Entertainment.

Rev. vii. 16.

Matth. viii. 11.

What the Importance of that other part is, wherein theſe Apoſtles are ſaid to *ſit on Thrones, judging the twelve*

twelve Tribes of Iſrael, Interpreters do not ſo generally agree. Some have thought their Authority in the Church Militant upon Earth to be meant by it. Of which I had Occaſion to ſpeak before. Others, and Moſt indeed, underſtand it of Honours to be conferred upon them in a future State. And here ſome have taken great Pains to determine, what Judgment theſe Perſons ſhall paſs; as, that they ſhall condemn the Errors of wicked Men by their Doctrines: the Malice and Obſtinacy of Infidels by their Perſecutions: and the like. Others have undertaken to aſſign them their parts in the Appearance and Proceſs of the Great Day of Judgment; and repreſented them, as ſo many Aſſiſtants to Chriſt, like the Bench in our Courts of Judicature to the Judge in Commiſſion: So conſtruing their Privilege here literally; that They ſhall ſit upon the Examination and Trial of Mankind, and all the reſt ſtand at the Bar, as Priſoners upon their Deliverance. But, though we are well aſſured, that ſuch a Judgment ſhall be; yet, as to the particular Circumſtances and Formalities of it, the Scripture ſeems to give us but a very ſlender inſight. So that, ſetting all the dark Conjectures about this Matter aſide, the moſt ſafe and probable way (in my Apprehenſion) of applying this Paſſage, is to look upon it, as ſpoken after the manner of Men, to ſignify in general a brighter Crown, and more exquiſite Degrees of Happineſs and Glory: Juſt as thoſe in Princes Courts are moſt highly honoured, who are allowed to ſit down with them at their own Tables, and are in the chief Places of Truſt, and moſt eminent Poſts about them. Theſe Perſons accompanied, and owned, and ſtuck cloſe to Chriſt in his loweſt Eſtate; They kept the Faith, when there were the greateſt Temptations to draw them off from it; They were indefatigably diligent, undauntedly conſtant, in their Labours and Sufferings for the Truth, and moſt eminently Serviceable in advancing the Kingdom of

Epiſt. St. Matthias's Day.

Chriſt upon Earth: And therefore they ſhall receive an eminent Diſtinction in his Kingdom in Heaven. This is what the Words undoubtedly denote; even in the Notion of thoſe, who contend for a ſtrict Interpretation of them. And this is enough for the preſent purpoſe; and avoids any Inconveniences liable to be charged upon a Conſtruction, which the Scripture does not ſeem to have left any ſufficient Warrant, at leaſt not any Neceſſity for. The Pre-eminence of the Apoſtles however, which I contend for, is manifeſt in both Acceptations. For, if they ſhall actually have their Thrones and aſſiſt in that great Work, This is a ſignal Prerogative; And, if the Thrones and the Sitting here be Metaphorical, as the Table and the eating and drinking are before, even thus a very remarkable Preference is acknowledged to belong to them alſo.

The Words of the Promiſe being thus explained; it is fit I now apply myſelf to ſhew, that this Argument uſed by our Saviour, is a very fit one for his Deſign: Which was, to check that vain Ambition of his Diſciples, and to bring them off from their Fondneſs of ſuch Worldly Promotions and Advantages, as they falſly conceived and hoped, would ſhortly be beſtow'd upon them. Now this he does theſe three ways.

1. *Firſt*, By putting them in mind of the manner of Life they had led together, a Life of *Temptations*; that is, of great Adverſity and ſevere Trials. And this might, if duly attended to, convince them, that the Kingdom they were to partake of, could not poſſibly be like thoſe of this World. For every wiſe Maſter takes Care to initiate and prepare thoſe under his Direction, for the ſeveral Poſts they are deſigned to fill. The Great and Honourable are accuſtomed to Courts and Auguſt Appearances; they are let into Secrets of State, and taught the Arts of Government betimes, by converſing with Greatneſs, and rendring it familiar. Thus they may riſe to and be qualified for it by Degrees; and

and not grow giddy with the Surprize of a ſudden Advancement, nor betray their Rawneſs and Ignorance, when inveſted with Honours they know not how to manage. But how mighty diſtant from This, was the Method Chriſt took with himſelf and his Diſciples? He choſe moſt of them from mean Employments, and ſought not to improve them with thoſe of a higher Rank. They led Lives of Solitude and Privacy, except when the Buſineſs of Preaching and doing Miracles called for their Appearance in publick; And then the Entertainment they met with, was commonly Oppoſition and Scorn. The whole of their Practice was to endure, and to harden themſelves againſt any ſevere Encounters, which their Faith might be engaged in. The Principle, upon which they were taught to perfect themſelves, was that of Patience and Meekneſs. To the Poverty of their Fortunes they were taught to add that of their Spirits too; to forbear and deſpiſe the Pomps and vain Delights of the World; and to take no Joy in any thing, equal to that, which ſprung from being perſecuted and ſpitefully uſed, reviled, and defamed falſly, for the ſake of God and Goodneſs. Reſiſting unto Blood, and laying down their Lives: being led as Lambs to the Slaughter, and dumb all the while, as Sheep before the Shearers: Theſe were Diſpoſitions exceeding contrary to thoſe which Secular Princes are inſtituted to. And, as foreign as Theſe are from Arms, and War, and Garments rolled in the Blood of thoſe which contend with us: So far were the Victories, and the Triumphs, and the Crowns, of Chriſt and his Followers, from the Laurels and Trophies of Them, whoſe Buſineſs and Glory it is, to defend or to enlarge their Territories, and ſubdue all Oppoſition by dint of Sword and Revenge. By all the Inſtruction therefore, and by all the Exerciſe theſe Diſciples received under their Maſter, it might, one would imagine, have eaſily been diſcerned, that the Adverſaries, againſt whom They were trained,

are of another kind: The Paſſions and the Weakneſſes of their Own Minds, and the Malice and Perverſeneſs of other People's. And therefore the Reward and Advancement to be expected, conſequent to ſuch an Inſtitution, muſt have been ſomewhat Spiritual and Future. For it could not conſiſt in any thing of this World; the Contempt and Abandoning whereof was ſo eminent a Branch of their Duty; and the perpetual Adverſities and Perſecutions they engaged with in it, were an Expedient purpoſely deſigned to wean their Affections from it, and teach them to place their Hearts and Deſires on a better State. And in this Senſe we may underſtand our Lord, when he ſays, *He appoints them a Kingdom, as his Father had appointed unto Him*; That is, He ordained that they ſhould attain it by the ſame Methods of Trials and Sufferings, of which they had already ſeen Him encounter a great deal, and would now immediately be Eye-witneſſes of his enduring infinitely more; Even in the Paſſion, and Agonies, and Ignominy, and Death, which at that Inſtant, when he ſpoke theſe Words, were drawing on apace to attack him. Now, what could be more proper to compoſe the Contentions about Precedence than this; That there was no manner of Occaſion for any ſuch Diſputes in their preſent Circumſtances; and that their Fortunes and Affairs in the World were, and would be ſuch, that Afflictions and Calamities ought rather to employ their Thoughts, than Honours, or any ſecular Advantages? If then a Strife muſt grow among them, the only ſeaſonable Subject of it was, not who ſhould riſe higheſt, but who ſhould endure moſt Indignities; Which ſhould lay himſelf out for the Good of others with greateſt Zeal, and ſuffer with the greateſt Reſignation and moſt invincible Patience.

2. *Secondly*, By ſaying that he *appointed unto them a Kingdom, as his Father had appointed unto Him*, he intimated to them, that Their Happineſs ſhould be of the

the ſame Kind with His. And this is another Motive to Peace, and ceaſing all Strife about Superiority. For our Saviour had given many Inſtances in his Life, to manifeſt the Truth of what he afterwards told *Pilate*, that his *Kingdom is not of this World.* When the Multitudes, who had been miraculouſly fed in the Wilderneſs, would have acknowledged him as their Leader; and deſired that he would take the Regal Honour upon him, he induſtriouſly avoided it. And when two Brothers at Difference about an Eſtate, deſired him to interpoſe and determine their Controverſy; he declined all Pretenſions to the Quality of a Ruler or a Judge over them. When a Treacherous Diſciple had betrayed him into the Hands of thoſe bloody Wretches, who impiouſly ſought his Life; he reproved the forward Zeal of a Servant that attempted to reſcue him: Nor would he, as it is the Cuſtom and Duty of Temporal Princes, ſuffer his Friends to fight for him. Legions indeed he had, but they were Legions of Angels; and his Territories are thoſe glorious Regions above, where Bleſſed and Immortal Spirits dwell. This was the Principality God had prepared for his Son. And ſure what the Only-begotten and Beſt-beloved was deſtin'd to, his Servants had reaſon, not only to be content with, but to prefer before all other Promotions whatſoever. It was enough in this Caſe, that the *Servant ſhould be as his Lord, and the Diſciple as his Maſter.* If the Honours and Pleaſures of a lower World were not ſet apart for the Encouragement and Reward of ſuch Fidelity; The Reaſon is, that they were not worthy the Acceptance of Him and his Friends; and, that God had provided ſome better thing for them. Honour before the Majeſty of Heaven, ſtable and certain; inſtead of that fleeting Shadow, that blaſt of popular Breath, that Muſhroom which comes up and dies in a Night: Which is often given, and as often taken away, without

John xviii. 36.

John vi. 15.

Luke xii. 13. 14.

Reaſon or Deſert, falls upon Good and Bad promiſcuouſly; and, after a ſhort glittering Splendor, ſets and dies in Hatred and Diſgrace. A Crown, without the Thorny Cares that all Earthly ones are beſet with; not ſubject to Change or Decay, but above even Mortality itſelf. A Range of Happineſs vaſt and unbounded; ſuch as fills the largeſt Heart, and even exceeds the Imaginations and Wiſhes of Them that labour after it. A Condition of Tranquillity ſo abſolute, of Love and Joy ſo generous and great, that every Soul delights itſelf with the Felicities of Others, and counts Them an Addition to his own. So that no place is left for Ambition or Emulation: No envious or greedy Paſſions inhabit there; and They, who look up to this Bliſs, will be very far from grudging any of the Difficulties undergone for the Attainment of it; will eſteem whatever Earth contains, or can propoſe, a Trifle in Compariſon; will find no Temptation to ſtrive for Greatneſs there; ſince no one's Abundance ſhall create another's Want: but all ſhall abound, and all be greater than they now can aſk or think.

3. But *Thirdly*, Though All ſhall abound, yet we are not from thence to conclude, all ſhall have an equal Portion. And for this reaſon, what our Lord adds in the *Thirtieth* Verſe tends thus far to the Satisfaction of the Apoſtles in this Thirſt for Honour, that there ſhall be a Difference of Honour and Happineſs in that Spiritual and Eternal Kingdom alſo; and, that the higheſt Room was reſerved for Them. So then a Superiority and Precedence there will be, though not ſuch a one, as their yet carnal Underſtandings had formed Ideas of. 'Tis true indeed, the loweſt Place in Heaven is prodigiouſly above the Merits of the pureſt Saint; but yet, ſuch is the Mercy and Bounty of God, that he does not only beſtow upon every one more than he deſerves, but obſerves a Proportion, even in the Exceſſes of his Goodneſs; and to thoſe, who labour more abundantly, and make

make a larger Improvement of the Talents committed to their Truſt, he aſſigns a more plentiful Recompence. The Character of a righteous Judge is, not only to puniſh the Evil, and reward the Good; but to aſſign a ſorer Puniſhment to thoſe who have offended more grievouſly; and a better Reward to them, that have been more faithful and diligent. And, when we are told, that every Man ſhall receive from Chriſt's Tribunal, *according to what he hath done in his Body, whether it be good or bad*: It is very agreeable to Reaſon, to interpret that Paſſage, not only, that they who have done Good ſhall receive Good, but that they ſhall receive *according to what they have done*; That is, the Degree of their Happineſs ſhall be encreaſed or diminiſhed, in Correſpondence to the Degree of the Good they have wrought, or of the Evils they have ſuffered, for the ſake of God and their Duty. So likewiſe St. *Paul*, tells the *Corinthians*, that *He, who ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, and he that ſoweth plentifully ſhall reap plentifully.* From whence it follows, that God is not unrighteous. He forgets not any Man's leaſt Labours: All ſhall reap who have ſown, but all ſhall not reap alike; becauſe all did not ſow alike. And therefore the Quantity of the Crop, at this Harveſt, will depend upon the Liberality of him who ſcattered the Seed.

2 Cor. v. 10.

2 Cor. ix. 6.

There is yet another Paſſage commonly inſiſted upon to this purpoſe: 'Tis, that whereas Good Perſons, for the Generality, are promiſed, that they ſhall be with the Spirits of the juſt Men made perfect, and ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, and the like; Thoſe Patriarchs and Prophets are ſaid to ſit down with Chriſt, at his own Table, in his Kingdom. All ſhall ſee God, and in that beatifick Viſion conſiſts their Happineſs: But all ſhall not have ſo near, ſo full a Proſpect of him; nor be equally raviſhed with that Proſpect. All ſhall

be crowned, but every Crown ſhall not be equally bright; though every Crown ſhall be a Crown of Glory, and every one Immortal. And the ſignifying this to the Apoſtles was very fit to quiet their preſent Emulations, to excite their Zeal and Vigilance, and to render them eaſy and content with their Care and their Sufferings: when they were thus aſſured, that none of theſe things ſhould paſs unregarded; and that the only way, not to be behind any of the others, was to *labour more abundantly than they all.* The Advice then given them in the Words immediately foregoing, was the moſt gainful Method, the readieſt and ſureſt way of acquiring Honour in Chriſt's Kingdom, *He that is greateſt among you, let him be as the Younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth ſerve.*

The Sum of our Bleſſed Lord's Argument to check his Diſciples in their Ambitious Emulation, turns (you ſee) upon theſe three Points. (1.) That it was a moſt abſurd Expectation, to imagine that any thing ſo contrary to their Inſtitution and whole Method of Life, as Worldly Greatneſs was, ſhould be the Happineſs intended for them. (2.) That a Happineſs however was reſerved for their Reward, and that too of the very ſame Nature with their Maſter's, the Son of God himſelf; ſuch as they ſhould be highly ſatisfied with, and find no Occaſion to envy any other for, or to ſtrive about Precedence in. (3.) Yet, that ſome Priority there was; and, whoſoever among them exceeded in Diligence, and Humility, and Condeſcenſion in doing Good, and Patience in enduring Evil, for Chriſt's ſake, and in purſuance of their Office in propagating the Goſpel; ſhould find a due Reſpect had to his Pains and Faithfulneſs, and be preferred in the Kingdom of Heaven accordingly.

And now, after having inſiſted thus long upon the Meaning and Importance of theſe Words, with regard to the Caſe of thoſe contending Apoſtles; I ſhall very briefly mention ſome Reflections, fit to be drawn from hence

hence, ſuch as ſuit the Circumſtances of Men in general.

1. As *Firſt*, Since the Temptations mentioned in my Text were Poverty, Shame, Danger, and other Kinds of Adverſity; it may be of uſe to obſerve, how well the Ends of Religion are ſerved by ſuch Providences. For they render the Virtue of the Perſons more conſpicuous; their Patience, and Conſtancy, and Truſt in God more approved; and eſpecially they vindicate their Sincerity from that Inſinuation of the Devil againſt *Job*, and the too common Jealouſy of wicked Men, that God is ſerved only for the ſake of Temporal Intereſt. When Adverſity falls upon pious People, it ſhews them to themſelves, and to others. It gives them the Satisfaction of knowing their own Steadfaſtneſs; and convinces the Unbelieving World, that there is really ſuch a thing, as cleaving to God out of a Principle of Duty and Conſcience; That Some can abſtract from all thoſe Advantages and Encouragements, for which Chriſtians are often ſuſpected to have a greater Regard to the Gain, than to the Godlineſs, of their Obedience.

2. But *Secondly*, We ought to obſerve likewiſe, what Proof is given of our Integrity in ſuch Caſes, and upon what Terms any Benefit is to be expected from them. Which is, only upon Condition of our *continuing* with Chriſt in theſe *Temptations*. Perſeverance and Faithfulneſs unto the End, not fainting under Tribulation, not growing weary of well-doing; Theſe are the Terms, Theſe are the Evidences of our Virtue, to which a Crown of Life and Righteouſneſs is promiſed. The *Galatians ran well once*, but *they ſuffered themſelves to be hindred from the obeying of the Truth*; But he that wins the Prize, muſt run on till he reach the Goal. Several others addreſs'd to Chriſt, and kept him Company for a while; but they forſook him again: And the Commendation here diſtinguiſhes theſe Apoſtles from ſuch a Levity, as thoſe Deſerters Gal. v. 7.

ſerters were guilty of. We cannot indeed continue with Chriſt at this Day, in the ſame manner they did then; becauſe we do not converſe with him as They did, nor ſee the Abuſes he ſuffered in our Fleſh. But we do continue with him in Temptation; as oft as any Difficulty beſets us, but cannot draw us off from our Duty; as oft as any Misfortune aſſaults, but cannot vanquiſh our Hope and Patience: As oft as we ſee his Holy Doctrine traduced and vilified, His BleſſedName profaned, his Precepts neglected, his Promiſes and Threatnings ſlighted and ridiculed; and yet ſlacken not our Zeal one whit, nor are in any Degree aſhamed of being eſteemed thoſe ſimple honeſt Men, which the Goſpel calls *Chriſtians*. For it is a very commendable Inſtance of our Piety, not to be ſeduced by Example, nor borne down with the Torrent of a common Vogue. To hazard the Reproaches of being ſingular and preciſe, rather than to ſacrifice our Conſcience to a falſe Reputation, or join in a faſhionable Contempt of Religion. And happy are thoſe Men, who can make *David*'s Profeſſion, *The Proud have had me exceedingly in Deriſion, yet have I not ſhrinked from thy Law.*

Pſal. cxix. 51.

3. *Thirdly*, If we conſider the Perſons to whom, and the time when, theſe Words were ſpoken; there is yet this farther Comfort to be gathered out of them, that God hath great Compaſſion upon our Weakneſs; and does not reckon a good Man's Perſeverance loſt and broken, by any Interruption, with Human Frailty and a ſurprizing Occaſion may make in it. For, did not our Lord deliver himſelf in theſe Words a little before his Paſſion? Did not every one of theſe Apoſtles forſake him? Did not one of them deny him in few Hours after? Did he not know, nay had he not already foretold, this Scattering and Offence becauſe of him? Yet you ſee, all this notwithſtanding, he allows theſe very Perſons the Character of Friends, *that continued*

nued with him in his Temptations; and promiſes a Reward for their Courage and Conſtancy in ſo doing. From whence now we have leave to argue, that God does not ſhew himſelf *extreme to mark what is done amiſs*, but ſets a juſt Diſtinction between Failings and Faults. That ſome Calamities, when ſudden and violent, may put us beſide our Duty, and prevail too far upon our Paſſions; without the utter Ruin of our Souls, or forfeiting the Praiſe due to our former Piety. And, provided we be diligent in calling back Reaſon and Religion to our Aſſiſtance; if we return, as ſoon as poſſible, to a right Mind, and do well, and lament our Offence; all may be very well. For to thoſe, who do not tranſgreſs wilfully, nor indulge their Paſſions, till they grow into voluntary and preſumptuous Sins, the Slips of meer Infirmity ſhall never be imputed to their Prejudice.

4. *Laſtly*, The Subject before us teaches us to deſpiſe this World, and to long for a better. This, you ſee, is not the Place of Rewards; it hath nothing in it capable of being a Reward; Nothing worth the ſufferings and Obedience of a good Chriſtian; Nothing that can ſatisfy the Deſires of a truly great Soul. If therefore we would indulge a Lawful and Commendable Ambition; Let us ſeek that Honour which cometh from God only; and endeavour to be Perſons, whom the King of Heaven may delight to prefer. If we thirſt after Plenty and Pleaſure, none of the Trifles here below can ſatiate our Appetite. It muſt be ſincere and laſting Pleaſure: it muſt be true and ſtable Honour: And ſuch is only to be had in that Kingdom, which Chriſt appoints to all them who continue faithful in *Temptations*. Which God grant us all Grace to do here, that we may have Glory for it hereafter. *Amen.*

St.

St. MATTHEW's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. Matthew.

THAT this Apoſtle deſcended from Jewiſh Parents, there can be no manner of Reaſon to doubt; If we ſuppoſe him, as has been generally believed, to be the ſame with that *Levi* the Son of *Alphæus*, whom St. *Mark* in the *Second*, and St. *Luke* in the *Fifth* of his Goſpel, make mention of. The Cuſtom of having more Names than one is known to have prevailed among the Jews; And the Circumſtances of the Account given by thoſe Evangeliſts, carry ſo exact an Agreement with the Goſpel of this Day, as will not ſuffer us, I think, to underſtand them of different Actions and Perſons. An ancient Writer makes the Place of his Birth to have been *Nazareth*, and derives his Parents from the Tribe of *Iſſachar*. However that be, His Employment we know was a Publican. Concerning which Office, the Corruption it was generally exerciſed with, and the great Diſrepute it fell under upon that Account, enough hath been ſaid formerly. Mean while, This preſents us with an Inſtance of Charity in the Writers of the other Goſpels; Who, to cover the Infamy of this their Brother's former way of Life, ſeem induſtriouſly to have declined all mention of his Buſineſs before the Call to the Apoſtleſhip, and to have choſen to ſpeak of him under his other Name. It gives us alſo an Evidence of his own great Humility, who, in the Goſpel written by himſelf, does not only take the more commonly known Name of *Matthew*, but adds that odious and deſpiſed Title of *Matthew the Publican*. By this, no Queſtion, he intended to magnify the Grace of God, and

Mark ii. 14. 17. Luke v. 27. 32.

Goſp. Sund. XI. *after* Trinity.

Ch. ix. 9. — x. 3.

and the Condeſcenſion of our Bleſſed Saviour, who did not only admit to his Converſation and the Means of Repentance, but diſdained not to take into the higheſt Dignities of the Chriſtian Church, Thoſe whom the World accounted moſt vile; Thoſe who were qualified for ſuch diſtinguiſhing Marks of Favour, by being vile in their own Eſteem.

That he lived in Circumſtances of Plenty may be reaſonably preſumed; not only from the exorbitant Gains uſually made of the Publican's Office, but from the Greatneſs of the Entertainment, and the Number of the Gueſts, wherewith our Lord was receiveth at his Houſe, immediately after his Call. And yet this Wealth, and all the Proſpects of more, were no Obſtruction to quitting all Secular Advantages, and following the Perſon and Fortunes of a Maſter, who made no ſcruple of declaring, that He *had not where to lay his head.* So ſudden and powerful are the Changes wrought in our Hearts, when effectually touched by Divine Grace: But withal, ſo Rational, and ſo free from all juſt Imputation of Raſhneſs and Enthuſiaſm, was the compliance of this Apoſtle; when it is conſidered, that his Abode and Buſineſs at *Capernaum*, and that the Fame of our Lord's Miracles done there in great abundance, and particularly that famous one upon the Paralytick juſt before, muſt needs have been a good preparation toward it, with any attentive and unprejudiced Mind.

Luke ix. 58.

Mat. ix. 2. 8.

He continued with our Lord during his abode upon Earth; and, after his Aſcenſion, preached the Goſpel in *Judea*, for about the ſpace of eight Years. Then it was, as *Euſebius* thinks, that, intending to betake himſelf to the Converſion of the Gentiles, He did, at the Requeſt of the Jewiſh Converts, write the Goſpel we now have under his Name. But others, calculating from *Irenæus*, the time of St. *Paul's*

Euſeb. *Hiſt.* L. III. C. 24. 39. L. V. C. 8. 10. L. VI. C. 25. Hieron. *Catal. Script.* Iren. L. III. C. 1.

See Mill. Prol. in N. T. *p.* viii.

Paul's being at *Rome*, rather place it about the LXIst or LXIIdYear of our Lord. To make it more uſeful to Them, at whoſe Inſtance he wrote, the Original Language of it was Hebrew. To what Hand we owe the Greek Verſion, is not ſo univerſally agreed.

Mill. Prol. *p.* viii.

Some aſcribe it to St. *John*; Others to St. *James*, the Brother of our Lord, and firſt Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*. Which Conjecture, if true, renders the inſpir'd Tranſlator of equal Authority with the firſt Author. That this Goſpel was written long before the other Three, is out of queſtion; and how Valuable a Treaſure, and Authentick an Account of our Lord's Actions and Doctrine it was eſteem'd, the Reader could not but obſerve from the Account given of St. *Bartholomew*: Whoſe carrrying this Book with him into foreign Countries, as the Standard of the Chriſtian Doctrine, is thought by ſome to have been an Act of Reſpect, practiſed by all the Apoſtles, when diſtributing themſelves for the Propagation of the Faith, through the ſeveral Parts of the World. The Countries in which he chiefly preached, are ſaid to be *Parthia*, and *Ethiopia*; the latter of which is expreſsly ſaid by *Socrates* the Hiſtorian, to have been St. *Matthew*'s Lot, when the Apoſtles had their reſpective Provinces aſſigned to them. In all theſe places he ſignalized himſelf by a Life of exemplary Abſtinence. And at *Nadaber*, a City in *Ethiopia*, he is moſt probably thought at laſt to have ſuffered Martyrdom. But of the Time and Manner of his Death no certain Account is tranſmitted to us.

Lib. I. C. 19.

Clem. Alex. L. II. C. 1. *Dr.* Cave *from* Ven. Fort.

The COLLECT.

Matth. ix. 9. Mark ii. 14. Luke v. 27, 28.

O Almighty God, who by thy bleſſed Son didſt call *Matthew* from the Receipt of Cuſtom, to be an Apoſtle and Evangeliſt; Grant us Grace to forſake all covetous Deſires and inordinate Love of Riches, and to follow the ſame thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, one God world without end. *Amen.*

The

The EPISTLE.

2 Cor. iv. 1. PARAPHRASE.

1. *THerefore ſeeing we have this miniſtry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;*

1. Since God hath appointed us Miniſters of this better Diſpenſation, we, in a due ſenſe of the Mercy, execute our Office with Diligence and Courage.

2. *But have renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifeſtation of the truth commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

2. And with all poſſible Integrity too; not ſtooping to any unlawful Art or Fraud or ſinful Accommodation, to eaſe ourſelves, or gratify others; but by delivering the Goſpel as it really is, and as becomes Men acting in the Preſence, and accountable to the Judgment, of God.

3. *But if our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt:*

4. *In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them.*

3, 4. And if the force of this Doctrine be at any time loſt, it is not from want of any Advantage or Excellence fit to recommend it: But from want of a good Diſpoſition to receive it, in Them, whoſe Wilful, God hath puniſhed with a Judicial, Blindneſs; by permitting the Temptations of worldly Intereſts and Carnal Luſts to keep their Minds ſtill dark: So that they perceive not the Excellence of this Doctrine, nor of Jeſus Chriſt its Author; in and by whom the glorious Perfections of God the Father are exhibited to Mankind.

5. *For we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and our ſelves your ſervants for Jeſus Sake.*

5. For He alone is the Subject we preach; and the Knowledge of him is the End we aim at: Not any Honour or Profit of our own; who are ſo far from exalting ourſelves above the Perſons we preach to, that we think no kind Office, which may do them good, too mean to ſubmit to, for the ſake of Their and our common Maſter and Saviour.

6. *For God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.*

6. And in this again We of the New, reſemble *Moſes* the Miniſter of the former Diſpenſation; that the ſame God, who in the beginning did, with a Word, bring Light out of Darkneſs; hath, by his Eternal Word Jeſus Chriſt, produced Spiritual Light in the Minds of Men: For he hath commanded the Glory of his Son reſting upon, and reflecting from us his Apoſtles and Miniſters, ſo to ſhine on our Hearers; as the Glory of the Lord heretofore firſt left a Luſtre on the Face of *Moſes*, and from thence was reflected down upon the People.

COM-

COMMENT.

THE Deſigns inſpired by Avarice and Ambition, are ſeldom ſo ſucceſsful, never ſo wicked and dangerous, as when Hypocriſy, and a pretended Zeal for Religion, are the Inſtruments to cover and promote them. The Management in theſe Caſes is ſometimes ſo artful, that Truth it ſelf is made to lead the Way to Error, and the Goſpel of Peace abuſed to purpoſes of Faction and Diviſion. Hence St. *Paul* complains to the *Philippians*, that as ſome *preached Chriſt* from a Principle of *Love and Good-will*; ſo there wanted not others, who preached him *not ſincerely*; but *out of Contention, and Envy, and Strife.* The Joy he profeſſes there to take in Chriſt being preached however, *whether in Pretence or in Truth*; is to Me a ſufficient Intimation, that, how Blame-worthy ſoever the Deſign of ſuch Preachers might be, who ſuppoſed thus to *add Affliction to his Bonds*; yet the Matter by them delivered was orthodox. For ſurely no Conſideration could have render'd the propagating falſe and dangerous Doctrines, though mingled and ſet off with plain and profitable Truths, a juſt occaſion of Joy, to ſo judicious and ſo zealous an Apoſtle.

Phil. i. 15, 16, 17, 18.

The different Treatment of thoſe Adverſaries, who ſet up as Teachers in the Church of *Corinth*, argues the Caſe here to have been far otherwiſe. He charges them with advancing Doctrines, which would not *abide the Trial*; and ſuch as the moſt innocent and beſt Intentions would but juſt leave a Poſſibility for the Author's Eſcape for maintaining: He compares their Superſtitions and Abſurdities to *Wood and Hay and Stubble:* Such as, though they did not deſtroy, were yet

1 Cor. iii. 12. — 15.

yet far from adding either Beauty or Strength to, or being at all of a Piece with, the good *Foundation* they were built upon. He threatens not only Them, but their Abetters, with the Spiritual *Rod*; in caſe they perſiſted in their Faction, and refuſed to hearken to the Inſtructions ſent by *Timothy*. And, in this *Second* Epiſtle, he ſignifies to us the Nature of thoſe Doctrines, and the Qualities and Behaviour of their Teachers. The Former, in the *Third* Chapter; Where his Compariſon of the Law and Goſpel, and the mighty Pre-eminences aſcribed to the Latter, are evidently level'd againſt the Magnifiers of the Moſaick Inſtitution. The Latter, in the Paſſage now before us; Where, by a Figure uſual in Rhetorick, he obliquely taxes his Adverſaries of thoſe Crimes and indirect Practices, from which he only expreſſes a Vindication of himſelf and his Fellow-Labourers in the Truth. For ſuch an Edge as this, upon the Scandalous and Licentious, the Subtle and Fraudulent, the Inveigling and Popular Meaſures of Schiſmatical Preachers, the *Second* Verſe appears to carry with it; when ſaying, *We have renounced the hidden Things of diſhoneſty, not walking in Craftineſs, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by Manifeſtation of the Truth commending ourſelves to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God.*

1 Cor. iv. 17. —21.

Abſtracting from the Charge of Corruption and Fraud, thus laid upon his Adverſaries; the Subſtance of what the Apoſtle alledges for himſelf and his Fellow-Labourers in the Goſpel, amounts to thus much, 1. That the Doctrines by them Advanced, and the Method of inculcating theſe Doctrines, were ſuch as had a Natural Tendency, and muſt, in the Reaſon of the thing, be effectual, to convince Men of the Truth, and perſuade them to the Practice of the Chriſtian Religion. And, 2. That whenſoever it ſhould (as in many Inſtances it did) happen, that their Hearers were not actu-

ally ſo convinced and perſuaded; this Inefficacy could not be juſtly imputed, Either to want of Force in the Arguments urged for that purpoſe; Or to any Defects or Miſmanagements in the Perſons urging them; but proceeded from the Faults and Indiſpoſitions of thoſe Hearers themſelves.

Of theſe Two Points the Scripture now under Conſideration does plainly conſiſt. A Scripture, very properly taken into the Offices of this Feſtival; Which commemorates that Apoſtle and Evangeliſt, to whoſe holy Labours the Church is indebted, for the earlieſt Account ſhe now enjoys of our Bleſſed Saviour's Actions and Diſcourſes. A Scripture equally applicable to Him, and the ſucceeding Writers and Preachers of the Goſpel in its primitive Purity, as to St. *Paul* and his Companions. And therefore it is now eſpecially ſeaſonable to obſerve, *Firſt*, What Evidences and Motives they have left us for our common Chriſtianity: And then, *Secondly*, How it comes to paſs, that theſe do not always operate upon the Minds of Men, as it is but reaſonable to expect they ſhould do. The Former of Theſe Particulars will be of ſervice for confirming us in our Own Duty: the Latter will help us to account for Other People's Failing in Theirs.

In ſpeaking to the Former, which ſeems to be meant by the Apoſtles *commending themſelves to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God, by Manifeſtation of the Truth*; we will briefly take a view of Two things.

1. The Nature and Condition of the Truth ſo manifeſted; And,

2. The Manner choſen to manifeſt it by.

Truth here muſt be extended to the Whole of that Doctrine, which the Apoſtles, by our Lord's Command and after his Example, thought themſelves bound to impart to Mankind, as neceſſary to their Salvation. And becauſe This was compounded, Partly of things to be Believed, and Partly of things to be Done; (but Theſe Latter to

be

be Done, in Conſequence of Thoſe Former being Believed) Therefore the manner of manifeſting this Truth muſt be juſtified, by proving, that They who undertook this mighty Work, were careful ſo to propound the Articles of Faith, that Aſſent to them could not fairly be refuſed; and ſo to inculcate the Rules of Life, that (Thoſe Articles being received) the Practice of Theſe could not reaſonably be declined. Accordingly I ſhall, in as few Words as I can, ſtate the Nature of theſe ſeveral Subjects, and the Methods uſed for treating them, as the Nature of each required.

The Objects of our Faith in this Caſe are of Two ſorts. 1. They may be Facts already done; ſuch as the Incarnation, Birth, Life, Miracles, Sufferings, Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcent of the Lord Jeſus; His Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles; and, in virtue of that Power, the Wonders wrought and the Church eſtabliſh'd by Them, and the like: Or, 2. They may be Doctrines grounded on thoſe Facts; And ſo the Remiſſion of Sins is, upon our Lord's meritorious Death; The Reſurrection of our Bodies, upon His riſing again; The Judgment to come, upon his Exaltation to the Throne of God; and the like. Or, if there be no ſuch particular Dependance and Relation as This; yet they may be ſuch, as are therefore ſaid to be grounded on Facts already done; by reaſon the very Doing of thoſe Facts render'd the Teſtimony of that Teacher, by whom they had been done, worthy of Belief.

Now Thoſe Facts have a right to our Aſſent, which are related by Perſons, who muſt be preſumed to have had a perfect Knowledge of the Matters they report, and to lie under no Temptation of miſrepreſenting what they know. The Former Qualification will preſerve them from being deceived Themſelves, The Latter will free them from any Suſpicion of deſigning to impoſe upon other People. This is all we aſk for eſtabliſhing the Credit of any

See Goſpel for Eaſter-*Day.*

Witneſs; And no Hiſtory was ever yet tranſmitted to the World, with an Authority equal to that of the holy Penmen, upon both the forementioned Accounts.

1. The Facts reported were abundantly notorious. Thoſe concerning our Lord's Incarnation and Nativity were proved, by the known Pregnancy of the Virgin, before any Cohabitation with her eſpouſed Huſband; By the Prediction of the Angel to *Zacharias* firſt, and then to *Mary*: The Former of theſe had been made a general Diſcourſe, from a ſudden loſs of Speech, and the no leſs ſurprizing Reſtitution of it: The Latter by *Mary*'s three Months abode with her Couſin *Elizabeth*: The Place, Time, and Manner of being Delivered of her wonderful Child; The Occaſion that brought them to *Bethlehem*; And the Report of the Shepherds, concerning the Viſion of Angels, and all the Particulars they had ſeen, to the Amazement of the whole Country.

The Reſt, and much the greater Part of theſe Facts, (by which thoſe Other received abundant Confirmation) were the Miracles, the Diſcourſes, and moſt memorable Paſſages of our Lord's Life and Death; His Return into the World again, and the Circumſtances of his leaving it. Now theſe were all Objects of Senſe: Such conſequently, as the meaneſt and moſt common Men are capable and competent Judges of. They had been done, not in the Preſence of One or a Few fanciful or partial Spectators; but before great Multitudes at once: Many of them, at thoſe public Feſtivals, which, by requiring the Attendance of the Jews, brought a vaſt Concourſe of People to *Jeruſalem*, from the ſeveral Quarters of their Country; a Country of but ſmall Extent, within which the Scene of this whole Tranſaction lay: A Tranſaction, that took up the ſpace of but Three or four Years after Chriſt's Baptiſm by *John*, and entrance upon his publick Miniſtry: And a Miniſtry, whoſe moſt remarkable Occurrences appealed to the Evidence even of Enemies, who neither wanted the Skill ſtrictly

to

to examine, nor the Malice moſt wickedly to traduce and blaſpheme, the mighty Works too plain to be denied. So far would they have been from ſparing to expoſe any Fraud or Miſrepreſentation; could ſuch have been diſcovered, either in the Actions themſelves, or in the Accounts of them afterwards given to the World.

All this indeed we muſt conclude them highly concerned to do, in Oppoſition to the Conſequences, which, they plainly ſaw, would be drawn from the Acknowledgment of their Truth. For it is farther to be noted, that moſt of Chriſt's Actions recorded by the Evangeliſts, are of a very extraordinary Nature. Such as foretelling future Contingencies, healing the Sick in an Inſtant, reſtoring Speech to the Dumb, Limbs to the Cripples, Sight to the Blind, nay even Life to the Dead; And many other marvellous Works. But above all, that of raiſing himſelf the third Day, after undeniable Demonſtration of his expiring upon the Croſs, after the Burial of his Body, and all poſſible Care to prevent any Acceſs to it.

Now if theſe Facts could not, as we may fairly affirm they could not be, becauſe they were not, diſproved; It was eaſy to ſee, and the Enemies of Chriſt and his Religion were ſufficiently aware, that ſuch Uſe would be made of them, as would not comport either with their Intereſts or Inclinations; and yet, ſuch as it was not poſſible to avoid the Mortification of. That theſe were Acts out of the Courſe, and beyond the Power of Nature, was obvious: That the Doer of them was aſſiſted by an Evil Spirit, was incredible: For the Deſign of our Lord's Miracles was directly oppoſite to the Devil's Kingdom; neither does it appear, that the Devil can controul the Powers of Nature at Pleaſure: And leaſt of all is it to be imagined, that Almighty God, whoſe Force is confeſſedly ſuperior to His, would allow him in ſuch a Courſe of ſtupendous Effects, as muſt needs reflect upon infinite Goodneſs and Truth,

by leaving it impoſſible for the moſt ſincere of Men to know, when his Aſſent is required to any Doctrine, as of Divine Revelation; and (if theſe of Jeſus were not ſo) what thoſe mighty Signs are, in which we ought to acquieſce, as the Finger and undoubted Works of God.

In all thoſe Texts, which look the other way, expreſs notice is taken of God's permitting ſometimes, extraordinary Operations of this kind, either for Trial or for Puniſhment. The former in *Deut.* xiii. the Latter in 2 *Theſ.* ii. Concerning which, when our Lord himſelf is ſpeaking, *Matth.* xxiv. 24. he inſerts that very remarkable Clauſe, (for the Security of truly good Perſons, and to ſhew that They ſhall be preſerved from any fatal deluſions) *that the Signs and Wonders* wrought by *falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets* ſhould be ſuch as *to deceive* (if that were poſſible) *the very Elect*. The meaning whereof I take to be; That the truly virtuous and good, whoſe Integrity needs no farther Tryal, and who have not, by any wilful Oppoſition of the Truth, deſerved the Puniſhment of ſuch Temptations, are in no danger of falling under them.

Geſp. II. *Sund. aft. Epiph.*

To proceed then. After what hath been offered upon this Subject heretofore, I ſuppoſe there is no need of adding, that the true and proper Credentials of a Meſſage from Heaven are Miracles: That this is an Iſſue, upon which Jews and Gentiles in all Ages have been content to be tried: So that, unleſs the Miracles of our Lord and his Apoſtles could be denied to have been wrought by a Divine Power; there can be no juſt ground for denying our Aſſent to any Doctrines taught by them. And unleſs the Facts themſelves could be diſproved; there is no poſſible way left to perſuade any reaſonable Man, why he ſhould not believe: Since there is no ground at all for imagining that the wonderful things recorded of Them were, or indeed could be, the Effects of any Power other than Divine.

Thus

Thus much may ſuffice for the Nature and Condition of thoſe Truths propounded to Mankind, as Articles of the Chriſtian Faith. We will now obſerve, how juſtly the Perſons propoſing them might be ſaid, from their manner of proceeding, *to commend themſelves to every Man's Conſcience, by Manifeſtation of the Truth*; That is, to have acted ſo clearly and fairly, as would take away all Excuſe from thoſe Unbelievers, who refuſed the Truth ſo manifeſted by them.

And *Firſt*, This was done by the Method taken in publiſhing the Hiſtory of the Goſpel. It is certainly a very great Advantage to any Truth, to have eſcaped all Endeavours of Suppreſſion, notwithſtanding the faireſt Opportunities, put into the hands of its Adverſaries for examining and confuting it. As particularly, if the Time, Place, Manner and Importance of the Relation do all ſo concur to this purpoſe; that if we would conceive it to be Falſe, we muſt at the ſame time conceive it utterly impoſſible, that it ſhould ever have been received for True.

(1.) But now the Goſpel-Hiſtory, and the Doctrines founded thereupon, did quickly get footing, and do ſtill (God be thanked) maintain their Ground, with a very conſiderable Part of Mankind. And yet no Lye was ever ſo ill contrived to paſs upon the World, as this was, had it been one. For They, who labour to impoſe falſe Characters and Accounts, are wiſe enough to wait a proper Seaſon. And ſuch Mortality is ſure to give; when the preſent Generation are laid to ſleep, and credulous Poſterity prepared for Impreſſions depending upon diſtant Reports, which none can contradict. But the Evangeliſts did not ſtay, till all Memory of the Matters recorded by Them was worn out. Theſe, as hath been hinted before, were all done within the Remembrance of moſt Men then alive: By far the greater part of them in a very little while before. They began to be publiſhed abroad immediately; In

ten Days after our Lord's Aſcenſion; The Event, moſt of all inſiſted on, as an Evidence and Confirmation of all the Reſt, (I mean our Bleſſed Lord's Reſurrection from the Dead) was openly preached, in fifty Days after it happened; and continued to be ſo from thenceforward, without any Interval of Ceſſation: The whole Account of our Lord's Life and Death was committed to writing by the Evangeliſt and Apoſtle of this Day, about eight or ten Years, (as ſome) or at moſt within eighteen (as others of the Ancients have computed) after that Death of His. This prudent Care of preſerving the Truth from the Variations, Miſtakes, and Corruptions, to which Verbal or too haſtily written Reports are inevitably expoſed, induced the Apoſtles to take Copies of this Goſpel into the ſeveral Regions where they travelled. And, by Theſe left behind them, to ſupply the want of their own Preſence and Preaching, when the Service of Religion called them off to other Countries. The ſame Reaſons moved St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* to write Their Account not long after. And St. *John*'s, the lateſt of all by far, was yet early enough, to have been diſproved by great Numbers then ſurviving, had any thing contained there been liable to juſt Cenſure. Of Theſe four, Two, we know, teſtify what themſelves ſaw and heard; and the Two other had their Accounts at the very firſt hand. St. *Mark*, as I took notice formerly, from St. *Peter*, and St. *Luke*, as himſelf declares, *had a perfect underſtanding of all things from the very firſt*, communicated to him by thoſe, *who were Eye-Witneſſes and Miniſters of the Word from the beginning*. But all of them agree in a fair Challenge, as it were, to any who ſhould preſume to queſtion their Authority; by this early Appeal, for the Truth of what they reported, to the Memories and Conſciences of many thouſands, Eye and Ear-Witneſſes as well as themſelves, and ſtill in being, to atteſt, or contradict,

St. Mark's *Life.*

Luke i. 2, 3.

as

as they ſhould ſee juſt Cauſe. All which was making an Experiment, which no Man of common Senſe or Modeſty would have the Hardineſs to venture upon; if not conſcious to himſelf, that his Reports will bear the Teſt, and gain the more Credit, in proportion as they are more nicely enquired into.

(2.) The ſame Argument holds good with regard to Place. For, if a Man were diſpoſed to form a Modern Hero out of his own Brain; the Scene would certainly be laid in ſome very diſtant Country, quite out of all Knowledge, and if poſſible out of all Communication with that, whoſe Inhabitants he intends thus to amuſe. This is a Notion ſo natural, as to render the Liberties taken by great Travellers (as the laſt Particular of Time does the Diſcourſes of Men in extreme Old Age) ſuſpected, even to a Proverb. But, would any Man in his Wits hope to put off a Forgery, not only near the Time, but in the very Place, where the Matters contained in it are ſaid to have been done? And yet to *Judea*, and *Galilee*, but chiefly to *Jeruſalem*, it is that all our Lord's Actions were confined. The whole Country ſmall enough to be without any great pains ſearched over: But neither of That had Men any need; ſince thoſe reported to be done at *Jeruſalem* lay ready at hand, and thoſe done in any other part might be eaſily known, by examining the Multitudes, who from every part paid thrice each Year their Attendance at *Jeruſalem*. And yet in this very *Jeruſalem* it was, that the Apoſtles firſt publiſhed theſe things. Here they inſiſted on them, eſpecially at thoſe ſolemn Feſtivals. Here they continued a long time, as ready upon all Occaſions to juſtify themſelves, and to anſwer all Oppoſers. And here the Subſtance of what they affirmed and taught, was firſt committed to Writing. But of all Places, why Here? To be ſure, had they been Impoſtors, This of all places was the moſt inconvenient. Inſtead of tarrying in the City, they ſhould have fled out of it imme-

immediately, tranſported themſelves to the remoteſt and moſt barbarous Countries, and haſtened to tell their Tale there, before Truth and their own Infamy could overtake them. And this, no doubt, would have been their Method, had they deſigned a Fraud. But Truth and the Propagators of it deſire the Light. And the daring to ſtand their Ground was a plain Indication, that *Jeruſalem* (as had long ago been propheſied) was the Common Centre, from whence their Doctrine ſhould extend it ſelf over the whole World; becauſe the Centre, in which our Lord's Actions and Sufferings, and the Evidences of them met. Here every freſh Comer might either come a Witneſs, or go back a Proſelyte; and from hence the Apoſtles diſtributed themſelves, to make an eaſier Conqueſt of the World; after the Fame of multiplying Converts, and a long Triumph here, over the vain Contradiction of Them, who wanted nothing but the Power, to deſtroy their Reputation and their Perſons together.

Iſai. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2.

(3.) The Credibility of the Goſpel-Hiſtory appears yet farther, by the great Variety of Facts there related, and the many remarkable Circumſtances, with which Each of them is ſet forth. When Men write with an Intention to deceive, they find it the ſafeſt Courſe, to be as little particular as well they can; to confine their Diſcourſe to a few Inſtances, and to report things in general Terms, and in a ſummary Way. But in this Caſe a direct contrary Method is taken. The Number of our Lord's Miracles is almoſt infinite: And yet that Number was ſo far from being affected, or proceeding from a vain Oſtentation; that *many other*, indeed the yet many more *things which Jeſus did*, were induſtriouſly omitted. The reaſon is, becauſe the End, aimed at in theſe Writings, was to give us ſufficient, but not to oppreſs us with ſuperfluous, Evidence of his Divine Nature and Power.

John xxi. 25.

Again,

Again, In the Miracles expreſly recounted, we have punctual Notice taken of the Times when, the Places where, and frequently the Dwellings and the Qualities and the Names of the Perſons upon whom, they were ſeverally done. All which contributed to render the Enquiry more eaſy, for Any who had the Curioſity to make it. And, as it furniſhed a ready way to remove the Doubts of Them, who were deſirous of full Satisfaction; So it gave great Scope and Opportunity to Thoſe, who thought themſelves concerned to weaken the Credit of thoſe Hiſtorians. And this would have been effectually done, if any One out of ſo many Facts, nay if any one Circumſtance belonging to any one of thoſe Facts, could have been clearly refuted. But This is what we never find yet done; Either by detecting a Falſhood in any of theſe Writers ſeparately: Or by ſhewing any Inconſiſtence between the Report of Each, when compared with the reſt. An Advantage, which we may be confident, was not neglected; if we ſuffer our ſelves at all to reflect upon another Conſideration yet behind, I mean

(4.) The Importance of the Facts related here. Now this was no leſs, than the eſtabliſhing a new Religion, in many Points diametrically oppoſite to thoſe, wherein Education and Cuſtom, Natural Inclinations, Vicious Habits, and Worldly Intereſt had already engaged Men. Religion hath ever been eſteemed a Matter of the laſt Concernment by ſober People of all Perſuaſions whatſoever; not to be taken up, or parted with, raſhly and upon ſlight Surmiſes. Had therefore the Chriſtian Religion found Men unprepoſſeſs'd in Favour of any other; it is not to be conceived, that even thus it ſhould have been embraced without long and ſerious Examination. But where the Prejudices to be vanquiſhed were ſo many and ſo ſtrong, the making its way through all theſe muſt needs have been a Work of exceeding great Difficulty. The Generality of People would

would be very tenacious of their old way, glad of any Objection to keep their Unbelief in Countenance, and ſure to allow every freſh one its utmoſt Force and Efficacy. We may therefore depend upon it, that no pains were ſpared in a nice, and critical, and even partial, Enquiry into thoſe Facts; Facts, which, if once admitted, drew ſo long a Train of unwelcome Conſequences after them, as nothing could prevail for ſubmitting to, leſs than the cleareſt Evidence and irreſiſtible Power of Truth. And however weak it may ſeem, in other Caſes, to argue from actual Non-Exiſtence to Impoſſibilities: Yet in This it ſeems no more than reaſonable, from the Event and Demonſtration that there *was not*, to infer, that there *could not be*, any Falſhood or Colluſion charged upon the Evangeliſts, or their Writings, as now contained in the New Teſtament.

I ſhould add, as Another Proof of all imaginable fair Dealing upon this occaſion, their great Sincerity and Impartiality; ſo plainly to be gathered, from not concealing many Paſſages, relating both to their Maſter and Themſelves, which would naturally tend to leſſen Both in the common Opinion of the World. Such are, The Meanneſs of our Lord's Parentage, The Obſcurity of his Life for Thirty Years, the Scorn and Inſults of his Enemies, the Infirmities and Paſſions he condeſcended to, The Diſorder and Trouble of his Agony in the Garden, The Scandal of his Death, and the like. Such again are, The infamous Occupation of Some, and the poor ones of Others, in their own Fraternity, before their Converſion and Call; Their Heavineſs and Rebukes, The Treachery of One, The Denial of Another, The poſitive and pertinacious Unbelief of a Third, The Cowardice of All. But this Argument having fallen under Conſideration heretofore, I content myſelf with a bare mention of it at preſent.

Goſpel for St. Thomas's Day.

If

If we now proceed to thoſe Rules of Living, by which Chriſtians were to walk; Here again we ſhall find undeniable Marks of their Integrity, particularly in the following Inſtances.

1. They urged the abſolute Neceſſity of a virtuous Life, as the natural Product of a true Faith; and that, without which Chriſt is called *Maſter and Lord* to no manner of purpoſe.

2. They ground this Neceſſity upon the Commands of our Saviour, the Encouragements and Aſſiſtances of his Grace, the Awe due to the All-ſeeing God and Searcher of Hearts, the preſent Reproaches of Conſcience, the Certainty of a future Judgment, And the Eternity of Rewards and Puniſhments: Each in their kind unconceivably great, according to the good or bad things done in this Body. Motives too forcible to be in reaſon withſtood; ſuch as leave no room for indulging one's ſelf in Hypocriſy or ſecret Sins; but muſt prevail, if any can, for *cleanſing ourſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, and perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. vii. 1. And this the Apoſtle ſeems to have had in view, when profeſſing himſelf here to have *renounced the hidden things of Diſhoneſty.*

3. They inculcated theſe Rules *without reſpect of Perſons*; not accommodating their Doctrines to the Luſts or Humours of Men; not courting the Favour of the Great, nor ſoothing the Vanity of the Learned and Witty, at the Expence of Truth and their own Integrity. They gave all People plainly to underſtand, that God, in the Day of Trial, will make no ſuch Diſtinctions, as are but too much regarded in this World; And thoſe, whom this Plain-dealing would not go down with, they dared, in conſcience of their Duty, to diſoblige: As knowing, that, whatever were the Conſequences, they *ought not to go beyond the Word of the Lord, to ſay leſs or more.* A noble Pattern for their

Succeſſors

Succeſſors, the Miniſters of the Goſpel in all Ages: Which They, who are not careful ſtrictly to imitate, betray the Cauſe of God, proſtitute their Character, and have loſt all right to this moſt valuable Comfort of St. *Paul* before us, of not *walking in Craftineſs, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully.*

4. They lived up to the Principles taught by them, and confirmed their Inſtructions by their Examples. Of how great Influence this is, common Experience proves. Every one ſees the Juſtice of that Indignation, with which our Lord rebukes the Hypocriſy of thoſe Phariſees and Scribes, *who bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them on Mens ſhoulders; but they themſelves would not move them with one of their fingers.* Theſe Teachers, quite contrary, declined no Hardſhip, omitted no Duty to which they exhorted others. But, like true Leaders in this Spiritual Warfare, diſtinguiſhed themſelves, by the moſt eminent degrees of Piety and Virtue. They could appeal to every place they came to, *how holy and juſt and unblameable* their Behaviour there had been. Their bittereſt Enemies indeed, though they ſought with all the nicety that Envy and Hatred could inſpire, were not able to find any occaſion of reproach in them. The only Crime alledged againſt them, was an undaunted Zeal in propagating Chriſtianity, and inflexible Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of it. Which was in truth not a Crime, but one of their brighteſt Virtues; and gave another undeniable Evidence of their Faithfulneſs and Honeſty: That,

Matth. xxiii.

1 Theſſ. ii. 10.

5. *Laſtly*, Of Suffering and Dying in Teſtimony of the Doctrines taught and written by them. This was the Caſe of every Evangeliſt, every Apoſtle, (St. *John* only excepted) ſo far as any notices of their Lives and Deaths have been deliver'd to Poſterity. And how juſtly He alſo may be reckon'd among the Martyrs, hath

hath been formerly obſerved. Of what they endured, and how little Threatnings and Perſecutions weighed with them, the Book of *Acts* gives a large Specimen. But, after enduring Bodily Torments, and all that makes this Life uncomfortable, to lay down even Life itſelf; to *refuſe Deliverance*; and neither be ſoftned with Allurement, nor broken with Terrors; Is not this a proof of believing themſelves, and being in very good earneſt? Can Lyes and Forgeries, can Humour and Obſtinacy, can Artifice and Popularity, can Affectation of Novelty living, or of a Name when dead, produce One ſuch Martyr, ſince the Creation? But if ſome One were ſo infatuated; could *Twelve* Men be ſuppoſed to perſiſt in ſuch Wickedneſs and Folly? Could thoſe Twelve not only Sacrifice themſelves, but perſuade Others, that it is Their Duty to do the like, when called to it; and in this Argument ſucceed ſo well, that Hundreds and Thouſands ſhould actually do the like; and, for three Centuries together, continue to offer up themſelves with joy and triumph; And in ſo great a number, and ſo long time, not *One*, when put to the Queſtion, diſcover the Fraud, and at once ſave himſelf, and do his Duty? Theſe are Extravagancies never to be ſuppoſed: And Thoſe are Effects, that never were or could be produced, by any Cauſe leſs powerful, than a full aſſurance of Innocency and Truth. Both which are ſo evident and illuſtrious in the firſt Preachers and Writers of the Chriſtian Religion; that a candid and conſiderate Man may almoſt ſtand amazed, how there ſhould remain ſuch a thing as an Infidel in the World. He muſt do ſo, had not St. *Paul* here told us, whence this comes to paſs; when ſaying at the *Third* and *Fourth* Verſes, *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them.*

Goſp. for St. John and St. James's Day.

Theſe

Theſe Words ſuggeſt a *Second* General Topick of Diſcourſe, compriſed in the Paſſage now before us; and ſeem to import thus much. That, when the Chriſtian Doctrines have not their intended Succeſs, ſuch Inefficacy cannot always be with Juſtice imputed, Either to the want of ſufficient Force in the Arguments brought for it; Or to the Defects or Miſmanagements of the Arguer; But is frequently, generally indeed, owing to the faults or indiſpoſitions, the wilful or the judicial Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Their Hearts, to whom ſuch Arguments are propoſed in vain.

Two Points this Subject would now engage me in, but that they have been conſidered in ſome former parts of this Work. The *Firſt* concerns the fatal power of Prejudice; Eſpecially that, which proceeds from the Conſideration of Worldly Advantages. The Other reſpects, the Nature of that Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart, which is inflicted as a Puniſhment, and the Juſtice of God in Puniſhments of this kind. The Former hath been obſerved, Vol. I. P. 43, 44, 108, 109. Vol. II. P. 372—3. Vol. IV. P. 32. The Latter, Vol. I. P. 237, 303—8. Vol. II. P. 316—18, 454—5.

I conclude with calling upon my Reader, ſeriouſly to weigh theſe Signatures of Truth here briefly touch'd upon, and the many more that might have been laid before him. Particularly, That of theſe very Hiſtorians atteſting their own Veracity and Miſſion, by the like Credentials from Heaven, as their Great Maſter had done His; and the aſtoniſhing Succeſſes, with which their Labours were ſo early crowned. The more ſuch Conſiderations are attended to; the more ſurpriſed we muſt needs be at the Boldneſs and Impiety of a Set of Men among us; who, at this time of Day, undertake to free their Brethren, as they ſometimes ſpeak, from the Bondage of Religion, by inſulting and attacking the Authority of the Holy Scriptures. A Wickedneſs, as impotent and abſurd, as it is malicious and perverſe.

For,

For, how vain an Imagination is it, to think of prejudicing Men againſt theſe Writings, with an idle pretence of Forgeries and Frauds; of which They, who had equal Good-will to Chriſtianity, but much greater Opportunities of tracing and detecting, could never find the leaſt Foot-ſtep? Can any thing new be expected, at this diſtance, in a Cauſe, which it was every Body's Concern and Endeavour to try, with the moſt curious and ſevere Inquiſition? And which, after ſuch trial, hath kept poſſeſſion for Sixteen Hundred Years? If not; Can a greater Affront be put upon Mankind, than to hope they will be banter'd out of their Religion, by the nauſeous Cavils of Infidels and Hereticks? There was a time indeed, when thoſe, how weak or wicked ſoever, were at leaſt not out of ſeaſon. But now, to ſerve them up afreſh for new Diſcoveries, after having been canvaſſed and refuted over and over, many Centuries ago, is to put too much upon the World; and equally proves the Modeſty, the Probity, and the Sagacity of theſe undertaking Men.

In ſhort, If the Writings of the New Teſtament be falſe; it will not be poſſible to know, that Any are, or ever were, true. If the Matters of Fact related there are all Fiction; Not only the Sacred, but Profane Story, Perſons unconcerned in the Cauſe, Strangers, nay Enemies, have helped forward the Impoſture, by their concurrent Teſtimonies. So that, either the Scripture muſt be kept in Veneration, or the Credit of all Contemporary Hiſtory muſt ſink with it. But above All; Let it not be objected, that ſeveral miraculous Actions and Events, recorded by the Evangeliſts, exceed our Belief: Since this will turn again upon them that make it. For, that the Chriſtian Religion ſhould prevail, and obtain ſo long in the World: A Religion, ſo contrary to ſenſual Luſts and worldly Intereſts: Conſiſting of many Truths, to Carnal Underſtandings, ſuch as St. *Paul* calls the *natural Man*, Offenſive and even

Folly: That ſuch a Religion, I ſay, ſhould bear down all that were before it, make ſuch wonderful Progreſs, and maintain its Conqueſts, in deſpite of all the Oppoſition made againſt it; and all this, without any Miracles to introduce and ſupport it; is an Event more unaccountable, more incredible, than Any, than All the Miracles recorded by the Four Evangeliſts, and in the Hiſtory of Three Hundred Years, taken together.

In a word, Infidelity and Irreligion are a *Blindneſs* brought upon the *Heart* by the *God of this World*: And the true way to believe and obey the Goſpel, is to aſpire after the Diſpoſition of that Writer of it, commemorated this Day. For, till *we have forſaken covetous Deſires, and inordinate Love of Riches*, it will not be poſſible for us, with Him, ſincerely to *follow* the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. To whom, *&c.*

PARAPHRASE.

9. Compare St. *Mark* ii. 14—17. and St. Luke v. 27. —32. * Quit that gainful Employment, and attend on Me for the future; and he did ſo immediately.

10. Hereupon he made a great Feaſt for Jeſus, at which were many of the ſame corrupt Occupation with himſelf, (invited probably with a purpoſe to give them opportunity of receiving the benefit of Converſion, as he had done.)

11. *&c.* See the Comment.

The GOSPEL.

Matth. ix. 9.

AND *as Jeſus paſſed forth from thence, he ſaw a man named Matthew, ſitting at the receipt of cuſtom: and he ſaith unto him,* * *Follow me. And he aroſe, and followed him.*

10. *And it came to paſs as Jeſus ſat at meat in the houſe, behold, many Publicans and Sinners came and ſat down with him and his diſciples.*

11. *And when the Phariſees ſaw it, they ſaid unto his Diſciples, why eateth your maſter with Publicans and ſinners?*

12. *But when Jeſus heard that, he ſaid unto them, They that be whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick.*

13. *But go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice. For I am not come to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.*

COM-

COMMENT.

WE have this Day ſet before us Another eminent Inſtance of the abſolute Freedom, the unſpeakable Mercy, and the wonderful Efficacy of that Divine Grace, which we are to conſider, as once before of a Perſecutor, ſo now of a Publican, making an Apoſtle. This was indeed firſt in order of Time, though the courſe of the Year preſented the other firſt to our View. But the Prevalence of Erroneous Zeal and Worldly Affections is ſo fatally great, that no Meditation, proper upon the Change of a *Saul* in his way to *Damaſcus*, can misbecome that of a *Matthew* at the *Receipt of Cuſtom*.

See St. Paul's *Day.*

The Nature of his Employment, and the Vices, for which they who exerciſed it were deſervedly notorious, my Reader hath been told already. From the Infamy of which, however, the Other Evangeliſts (as in Charity and Good-nature became them) endeavour to cover this their Brother; Yet He, in great Humility, both reports his own Converſion, and conſtantly mentions himſelf in ſuch a manner, as will not ſuffer us to doubt, whether He, who is now ſo great in the Kingdom of Heaven, were not once that vile and wicked thing, *a Publican*.

Goſp. for XI. *Sund. aft. Trin.*

Comp. Mat. ix. 9. — x. 3. *with* Mark ii. 14. — iii. 18. *and* Luke v. 27. 29. — vi. 15.

The Danger and Miſery of his Condition while ſuch, The ſpeedy and happy Eſcape out of it, The Goodneſs of our Lord in Calling, And the Readineſs of this Apoſtle in Complying, The Conſtancy of his Faith and Sufferings, the indefatigable Zeal of his Labours, And the laſting Benefit of his Writings, are Subjects, which we may make the right Improvement of, by turning our Eyes and Thoughts back upon the Inſtructions already laid down in the caſes of St. *Andrew*, and St. *Paul*.

At preſent therefore I chooſe to inſiſt upon freſh matter, with which the Goſpel for the Day hath furniſhed us, from the *Tenth Verſe* to the End.

This Paſſage, compared with the parallel Places of St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, (as referred to before in the Margin) acquaints us, that the Perſon, ſaid at the *Ninth Verſe*, to have been called by *Jeſus*, and to have followed him, did, after this Converſion,

Luke v. 23. *make him a great Feaſt at his own houſe.*

Our Lord was pleaſed, not only to accept the Invitation; but when there, not to diſdain the Company of many Gueſts, as liable to Cenſure and Reproach, as the Maſter of the Entertainment had lately been himſelf.

Of That Freedom the Phariſees endeavour to take a malicious Advantage. They inſinuate

Ver. 11. here, that it was a matter of juſt Offence, and very much unbecoming the Character of One, who profeſſed himſelf a Preacher of Righteouſneſs, to admit lewd and loſt Wretches into ſo great Familiarity, as Sitting and Eating at the ſame Table. Theſe were ſuch, as the Phariſees themſelves thought it a Profanation and mighty Diſparagement to be ſeen among. And therefore, when they obſerved *Jeſus* leſs ſcrupulous in the point, they endeavour to leſſen him in the Eſteem of his Diſciples, by that Queſtion at the *Eleventh Verſe*, *Why eateth your Maſter with Publicans and Sinners?*

From this malicious Reflection our Lord vindicates himſelf, in the Two following *Verſes*; By Arguments, not neceſſary to be taken notice of now, becauſe they will have their due place of being explained by and by. For my deſign, in making choice of this Paſſage, is to draw out of it ſome Rules, which may be uſeful in common Converſation. This Queſtion of the Phariſees plainly implies, not only in Themſelves, but in the Diſciples to whom it was put, an Opinion, that (ordinarily

dinarily ſpeaking) a good Man will not, may not, keep Company with vile and notoriouſly evil Men. On the other ſide, our Saviour's Defence of his own Practice proves, that ſuch Opinion, however reaſonable in the main, is not ſo neceſſarily and univerſally true; but that this may ſometimes be done, and that by Him particularly it was then highly fit to be done. Now the thing I aim at in the preſent Diſcourſe is, to ſhew, In what Caſes, and with what Limitations, it may be lawful to frequent the Company of ſcandalouſly wicked Perſons. The Conſequence whereof will be, that the General Rule of avoiding ſuch Company holds good, where thoſe Circumſtances do not make an Exception to it. For the more regular proceeding in which Point, I ſhall obſerve the following Method.

Firſt, I will conſider ſeveral Paſſages in Scripture, which diſſuade us from ſuch Company, and the Reaſons, which not thoſe Texts only, but theſe Phariſees went upon, in condemning them that frequent it.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew the force of our Lord's Arguments in his own Defence, and, that none of thoſe Reaſons rendred His Behaviour blameable in this Matter. And then,

Thirdly, I ſhall lay down ſome Cautions, neceſſary for thoſe who pretend to govern their Behaviour by our Lord's Example here; leſt, for want of Diſcretion in applying it to their own Caſe, they make this Action of His an Occaſion of Danger and Sin to Themſelves.

I. The *Firſt* Thing I propoſe, is to conſider ſome Paſſages in Scripture, which diſſuade us from the Company of wicked any ſcandalous People; and the Reaſons, which both theſe Texts and the Phariſees went upon, in condemning them that frequent it.

Now ſome of the Principal Paſſages of Scripture, referring to our preſent Purpoſe, are theſe that follow. *Bleſſed is the Man that walketh not in the Counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth* Pſal. i. 1.

in the way of Sinners, nor ſitteth in the Seat of the Scornful. I have not dealt with vain Perſons, neither will I have Fellowſhip with the Deceitful. I have hated the Congregation of evil Doers, and will not ſit among the ungodly. When thou ſaweſt a Thief thou conſentedſt unto him, and haſt been Partaker with the Adulterers. A froward Heart ſhall depart from me, I will not know a wicked Perſon. He that walketh with wiſe Men ſhall be wiſe, but a Companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroyed. To which we may add that of the Son of *Sirach. He that toucheth Pitch ſhall be defiled therewith, and he that hath Fellowſhip with a proud Man, ſhall be like unto him.*

Pſal. xxvi. 4, 5.

Pſal. l. 18.

Pſal. ci. 4.

Prov. xiii. 20.

Eccluſ. xiii. 1.

In the New Teſtament St. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians, Now I have written unto you, if any Man that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with ſuch a one, no not to eat.* And in his Second Epiſtle, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with Unbelievers. For what Fellowſhip hath Righteouſneſs with Unrighteouſneſs? And what Communion hath Light with Darkneſs? And what Concord hath Chriſt with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? And what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and They ſhall be my People. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* And once more, *We command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw your ſelves from*

1 Cor. v. 11.

2 Cor. vi. 14, &c.

2 Theſſ. iii. 6.

from every Brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us. Agreeable whereunto is that Exhortation to the *Romans*: *I beſeech you, Brethren, mark them which cauſe Diviſions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.* Rom. xvi. 17.

There is no need of explaining the particular Occaſions, and immediate Intention, of theſe and other ſuch like Texts. It is ſufficient, that we underſtand in general the main Ends they drive at, and the Grounds they go upon. And, I think, it is very plain and eaſy to diſcern, that All of them proceed upon ſome One or More of theſe Three Reaſons.

1. *Firſt*, We are commanded to avoid Men of ill Principles and Practices, for fear our Own ſhould be corrupted by converſing with them. For it is not only by what we do ourſelves, but by what we ſee Others do, that vicious Habits get ground upon us. And there are Moral as well as Natural Diſeaſes, of a contagious Quality to thoſe that come near; ſuch as will certainly be caught, except we be armed before-hand with very ſtrong Antidotes, againſt the Power of this ſpreading Peſtilence. Hence *Solomon* makes uſe of thoſe lively Reſemblances to expreſs our Danger in this Caſe. *Can a Man take Fire in his Boſom, and his Clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot Coals, and his Feet not be burnt?* Prov. vi. 27, 28.

When God brought his People into *Canaan*, he commanded them to deſtroy all the Idolatrous Inhabitants of the Land. This was enjoined, not only as a Puniſhment of the paſt Abominations thoſe wretched Men had provoked him with; but for the Security of theſe new Comers, leſt they ſhould be mingled with them, and ſo learn their Works. And indeed the venturing a Man's ſelf in debauched Converſation needs no other Proof of the infinite Hazard attending it, than the numberleſs Inſtan- Pſal. cvi. 34, 35.

ces of Souls hardned in all manner of Wickedneſs by ill Examples and profligate Company. The juſteſt Abhorrences cool and wear off, by being drawn in, firſt to a liking of the Wit and the Perſons, then to a favourable Judgment of the Failings, till at laſt we grow partial to the very Vices, of our Friends; and no Exceſſes or profane Liberties are ſo dreadful, but we are then content to ſee and allow, to comply with, nay even to vindicate and take delight in them. Thus do the very things, which were formerly wont to raiſe the greateſt Indignation, and even Aſtoniſhment, engage firſt our Affections, and then our Imitation: And we by degrees are formed into thoſe Prodigies of Wickedneſs, we uſed to ſtand amazed at. Thus do theſe Peſts of Human Society ſcatter the Plague whereſoever they come; and not only ruin Themſelves eternally, but make their Acquaintance too too often, by the Force of Cuſtom, or Perſuaſion, or Example, as much or more the Children of Hell than Themſelves.

But *Secondly*, Another Reaſon for our declining the Company of notoriouſly wicked Men is, that hereby we may, as much as in Us lies, diſcourage Vice. This ſeems more directly to be the Deſign of thoſe Paſſages, which I quoted out of the New Teſtament. For though our own Safety ought in the firſt Place to be provided for, and all ſuch Temptations carefully avoided, as may bring our Souls into Danger; yet is not the Safety of theſe our Only Care. There is alſo a conſtant and very tender Regard due to the Reputation of Virtue and Religion. And This would ſuffer but too much, and too juſtly, in the Eſteem of the World; if no Diſtinctions ſhould be made of Men, according to their Principles and Behaviour. For, how can we blame the Many, who are chiefly guided by Example, if they look upon Virtue and Vice as things indifferent, or of a very little Conſequence; when they ſee the ſame Reſpects paid to the Worſt and

to

to the Beſt Men? And, what greater Encouragement can the vileſt Wretches have, to perſiſt in their ſinful Courſes; than to be courted and careſs'd, and receive all thoſe Marks of Honour and Eſteem, which are only due (and were originally intended for Incentives and Rewards) to Men, whoſe Worth and Goodneſs hath diſtinguiſhed and raiſed them above the reſt of the World?

Hence, Not among the Jews only, but in the better Ages of Chriſtianity too, it was always accounted a Blemiſh, to aſſociate with ſuch Wretches, as lived in open Breach and Contempt of their Duty. And the caſting out ſuch from the Church by publick Cenſures, was ever look'd upon as a Puniſhment, which did not only ſhut them out from any Right and Part in the Offices of Religion; but declared them unworthy the Benefits of Civil Society; and prohibited all the ſound Members of this Body, from ſuch Communication with them in any kind, as might adminiſter the leaſt Countenance and Comfort, while they continued inflexible and unreformed. Nay, even where their Corruptions were not ſo flagrant, or the Diſcipline not ſo ſpeedy and ſevere, as to bring them under this publick Cognizance; yet zealous and good Men held themſelves obliged, by withdrawing from their Company, to ſhame them into better Manners. And very certain it is, that nothing is more likely to work upon ſuch Tempers, and draw them off from their Folly, than the making them ſenſible, by all prudent ways of expreſſing our Indignation, that Vice deſerves to be deſpiſed: that it indeed creates an irreconcileable Averſion and Diſeſteem, in all whoſe Friendſhip and Regards are truly valuable; that is, in every Wiſe and Good Man.

Among other Appeals to God for the Sincerity of his Heart in his *Service*, *David* makes uſe of This, *Do not I hate them, O Lord, that* Pſal. cxxxix. 21.

hate

hate thee, and am not I grieved with thoſe that riſe up againſt thee? Yea I hate them right ſore, I count them mine Enemies. Very reaſonably. For if the conſorting with Rebels and Traitors be, in the Eye of the Law, conſtrued an abetting their villainous Deſigns; how ſhall we approve our Loyalty and Affection to the King of Kings, while we ſupport and countenance thoſe wretched Creatures, who trample his Laws under foot, and do the utmoſt that their impotent Malice can do, to undermine his Government, and draw others into Rebellion againſt him? So indiſpenſably neceſſary it is to put a Difference between Good and Ill Men, in the Choice of our Friendſhips and our Converſation; for the more effectually diſcountenancing of Wickedneſs, for the greater Encouragement of Virtue, for preſerving the Honour due to God and Religion, and for the teſtifying our own ſincere Love of theſe to the World.

Pſal. cxxxix. 22.

Thirdly, Another Reaſon, which thoſe Paſſages of Scripture may be very well ſuppoſed to have in View, is the Regard Men ought to have for their own Reputation. This, when it looks no farther than a vain Ambition of being ſpoken and thought well of, is indeed of little Significance; but it is highly to be commended in other Reſpects, as it gives Credit and Authority to our Words and Actions, and enables us to do abundance of Good in the World. Thoſe Men therefore, who ſuffer themſelves to become indifferent to the Opinion and Judgment of others concerning them, ſeem not to underſtand the Value and Conſequence of theſe things. Which are in Truth ſo great, that, where People are biaſs'd in our Favour, we may even work Wonders upon them; and, on the other hand, where they are violently prejudiced againſt us, even Wonders themſelves will work nothing upon them. Now theſe Judgments are frequently formed, not only from the Actions we do ourſelves, but from the Morals of Them

Them who are particularly intimate and dear to us. When Men ſee us chuſe and delight in the Converſation of diſſolute and ſcandalous Livers, they will be apt to conclude us Birds of the ſame Feather; and that, whatever Face we may put upon the Matter, yet in our Hearts we think very favourably of ſuch Men and their Practices. For, were there not ſome Likeneſs in the Diſpoſitions, there could be no Reliſh for a ſort of Converſation, which we profeſs to be ſo very diſtant from our own, and ſo perfectly unſuitable to our Temper and Inclination. Thus when the Phariſees here could faſten nothing of Immorality upon our Lord, from any other Actions of his Life, they thought it ſufficient to tax his Conduct in this Particular; and, from that Eaſineſs of Acceſs, which he allowed the moſt infamous People, repreſented him to the World, as a *Gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.* Luke vii. 34.

Now it cannot be denied, but, according to the Meaſures uſually obſerved in our Familiarities, the Principle of judging Men by their Aſſociates is not very unreaſonable. It may perhaps be one of the ſureſt Rules, where we know nothing of the Perſons themſelves, ſufficient to form a Judgment upon. But tho' this miniſter ſome ground of Suſpicion, that thoſe Men are bad, whoſe Acquaintance are known to be ſo; Yet we cannot draw any infallible Concluſions from it: Nor is either This, or Either of the Former Reaſons, of that neceſſary Obligation, that Every Perſon ſhould deſerve to be condemned, who engages in Converſation with wicked Men. For, to ſet this Matter in its true Light, I ſhall now prove the Phariſees miſtaken in the Caſe of our Bleſſed Saviour. He ate and drank with Publicans and Sinners, and his Enemies thought wickedly, that *He was ſuch a one* as They; but *He reproved them*, and *ſet before them* truly *the thing that he had*

had done. This is what I propoſe therefore to conſider in the *Second* place.

II. The Behaviour of our Bleſſed Lord, and the Force of the Arguments produced in the Defence of it. From whence it will appear, that none of the Reaſons alledged under the former Head, came ſo up to his Caſe, as to render him blame-worthy in this Point.

The *Firſt* of theſe Arguments is contained in thoſe Words; *They that be whole need not a Phyſician, but they that are ſick.* By which he intimates, that he was about the Diſcharge of his proper Buſineſs. And as a Phyſician's Profeſſion calls him among ſuch virulent Diſtempers, where it would be the Extremity of Fool-hardineſs for Others to come; So He, whoſe Office it was to heal Souls, ought not to refuſe his Aſſiſtance to thoſe, whoſe Circumſtances moſt of all wanted his Help and Advice. The more raging the Diſeaſe was, the better it became his Character to adminiſter to it.

Ver. 12.

Thus the *Firſt* of thoſe Reaſons, formerly urged againſt converſing with notorious Sinners, did not reach our Saviour's Caſe. For he came not in the way of this Infection, ſo as to endanger himſelf: but purely to relieve them that lay languiſhing under it; and to recover a Sickneſs, which muſt have proved fatal, had not He in marvellous Charity condeſcended to interpoſe his Care.

The *Second* Argument uſed in his own Defence is contained in that Saying of the Prophet *Hoſea*, applied to this preſent Purpoſe, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice.* By the former of Theſe, *Mercy*, are meant all thoſe Inſtances of Kindneſs to our Neighbour, whereby we may promote his Advantage. By the Latter, *Sacrifice*, The Rites and Ordinances of the Ceremonial Law; Among which Sacrifice

Hoſ. vi. 6, &c.

Sacrifice was the Chief. And, by God's declaring, that he *will have* the One, and *not the* Other, is not ſignified his Refuſal, or abſolute Diſallowance of Either; but only, that he prefers *Mercy* before *Sacrifice*; and is deſirous, that thoſe Duties, which are enjoyned only as Marks of our Obedience to Him, without any other Conſideration to recommend them, ſhould give place to ſuch as are of ſubſtantial Benefit and Intrinſick Goodneſs. Now the Jews, and more eſpecially, that ſtricteſt Sect of them, the Phariſees, held it unlawful to keep Company with, or come near to Men of other Nations. And this was one Pretence of ſhunning Publicans; Becauſe They were either Foreigners themſelves, or engaged by their Calling to have Dealings with ſuch, and ſo were in both regards looked upon as Legally unclean. But this Notion they carryed yet farther; and made that Ordinance, which was deſigned to preſerve their Innocence, a Pretence for Hypocriſy, and Moroſeneſs, and Diſdain. They laid the chief ſtreſs upon the outward Formality; accoſted all, who were not equal to themſelves in Superſtition, with a *Stand off: I am holier than thou*; and held ſuch as were really, or ſuch as they accounted to be wicked and profane, in ſo great Contempt, that they took no Care to make them better; but thought it even a Fault and a Defilement to converſe with them, though for that very Purpoſe.

But now our Bleſſed Saviour's Conduct was very different from Theirs. And this Conduct he vindicates by putting them in Mind, that, however the External Rites and peculiar Diſtinctions of the Law might be acceptable to God, in their due Place and Seaſon; yet Charity to Men's Souls, which is the higheſt Act of *Mercy*, was much more eſteemed by him. And that Paſſage of the Prophet *Hoſea* might ſatisfy them, that God thought himſelf better ſerved, and the Honour of Religion more effectually conſulted, when Men apply them-

themſelves to the turning Sinners from their evil way, by ſeaſonable Inſtruction and Reproof, and by laying before them the Evil of their Doings; than when ſuch are ſuffered to periſh in their Folly, out of a moſt inhuman as well as unreaſonable Nicety, that it is not lawful to converſe with ſuch Men at all. When things are come to Extremity, and ſuch precious Treaſures as Souls lie at ſtake; it is no time to ſtand upon Form and Ceremony. And therefore our Lord ſet thoſe Punctilios aſide in the preſent Caſe.

Thus it appears again, that neither did his converſing with notoriouſly evil Men come within the *Second* Reaſon for avoiding ſuch, alledged under the former Head. Which was, for fear Vice ſhould by this means be too much encouraged, and Virtue diſcountenanced. For the End and Effect of *Jeſus* admitting theſe Publicans and Sinners into his Company, was the bringing them over from their Vices, and promoting the Honour and Increaſe of Religion.

Thirdly, Another Argument, if it be not rather an Illuſtration of thoſe which went before, is comprehended in theſe words: *I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* Thus he explains to them the great Deſign of his Appearance in the World, by declaring it to be the changing and reforming the Corrupt Manners and Diſpoſitions of Men. A Change, of which the Righteous ſtanding in leſs need, ſhould no more grudge the Opportunities of it to Sinners, than the Healthful ought to think themſelves neglected and diſparaged, when a Phyſician forbears the Viſits to Them, which he makes to the Sick. And a Change of ſo mighty Benefit, where it can be effected; that no Diſtinctions and Points of mere Ceremony are worthy to come in Competition with it. So then, if God prefer *Mercy* before *Sacrifice* in general; no doubt can be made, but he would be exceedingly well pleaſed, that this higheſt and moſt bene-

Ver. 13.

beneficial Act of *Mercy*, the teaching and converting the Ignorant and Wanderers, ſhould take place of that meaneſt Branch of *Sacrifice*, the declining having any thing at all to do with ſuch Men; in abhorrence of their Vices, and out of a conceit, that their Converſation ſtains and pollutes all that come near them.

Thus again our Lord acquits himſelf from the *Third* Reaſon under the Former Head; That of endangering his Reputation by ſuch Company, and giving any grounds of Jealouſy, that he was ſecretly ſuch himſelf. For all he did, was in purſuance of his Office; He could not have anſwered his Character, nor the End of his Coming into the World, ſhould he have behaved himſelf otherwiſe. And it were as reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that a Phyſician puts himſelf into ſick Chambers, to catch thoſe Diſeaſes he comes to cure; as to object againſt our Lord's Suffering the Publicans and Sinners to approach him, that he was a Friend and Favourer of that Wickedneſs, which he came to deſtroy and to diſpoſſeſs. But how could this be done, except by ſhewing them the Error of their Ways, and enabling them to grow better for the time to come? So that, upon the whole matter, here was no Offence given; and that which was taken, did not proceed from any Miſmanagement in our Lord's Behaviour; but from the Malice and blind Superſtition of the Phariſees themſelves.

Thus I have gone through the *Two* firſt Heads I propounded. The *Former* ſhewed the Reaſons of avoiding ill Company, which the Texts of Scripture concerning this Matter proceed upon, and ſuch as might miniſter ſome ground for that Queſtion, *Why eateth your Maſter with Publicans and Sinners?* The *Second* hath contained thoſe Arguments, by which our Bleſſed Maſter proves himſelf unblameable in ſo doing. I proceed now to my

III.

III. *Third* and Laſt Head, wherein I promiſed to lay down ſome Cautions for governing ourſelves after Chriſt's Example here; leſt, by an indiſcreet Application of this Action to our own Caſe, we ſhould render that which in Him was commendable and good, an occaſion of Danger and Sin to Us.

Now for the Underſtanding this matter aright, it will be neceſſary to mention *Three* things: Which, when conſidered and juſtly compared with our own Circumſtances, will prove ſo many excellent Rules to take our Meaſures by, in the Caſe now before us. And Theſe are, *Firſt*, The Condition of the Perſon, who allowed theſe Publicans and Sinners to eat with him. *Secondly*, The Quality or Diſpoſition of thoſe Publicans and Sinners themſelves. And, *Thirdly*, The End and Deſign aimed at in this Behaviour.

Firſt, It is fit we obſerve the Condition of the Perſon, who did thus eat with Publicans and Sinners. It was our Maſter *Jeſus Chriſt*. He, by the Perſonal Union of His own Divine with our Human Nature, and by the miraculous method of taking this Nature upon him, was not only free from that Original Depravation which ſtrongly diſpoſes Us to Evil; but under an abſolute Impoſſibility of contracting any Actual Guilt. Safe then He was above all reach of Danger in his Perſonal Capacity; And if to That we add his Public Character, what he might ſafely do in the Former reſpect, it even behoved him to do in this Latter. For how ſhall the Phyſician heal thoſe Sick, with whoſe Maladies he never acquaints himſelf? Or how ſhall a Reformer of Manners call thoſe Sinners to Repentance, with whom he never converſes? So then, theſe Circumſtances of our Bleſſed Lord inſtruct us, that Some may, and that others ſhould, be ſometimes converſant with notoriouſly wicked Men. And they inſtruct us likewiſe, What ſort of Perſons thoſe are, who are either fit, and ſo may venture; Or who are even obliged,

obliged, and ſo muſt not refuſe, to take all ſeaſonable Opportunities of converſing with ſuch People.

They then are proper for this hazardous Undertaking, who reſemble their Maſter in Innocence and Godly Zeal. Reſemble him, I mean, as frail Men are capable; by keeping themſelves unſpotted from the World, by fixed Principles of Virtue, by tryed Reſolutions, and long-confirmed Habits of doing well. Such as have got the upper hand of Temptations, and keep a ſtrong and conſtant Guard over their Infirmities, and are thoroughly convinced of the Neceſſity, the Reaſonableneſs, the Excellency of a Holy Life. Or ſuch, who, if they have not been ſo happy as always to have preſerved their Virtue unblemiſhed, have yet profited by their own former Dangers; and are poſſeſs'd with ſo juſt an Horror of the Sins wherewith they were once entangled, that there is even leſs likelihood of Their falling into the Snare again, than if they had never been overtaken at all.

But for Others, who are raw and undiſciplined; For Young People, whoſe Paſſions and Temptations are violent, Or for them, whoſe Principles are not ſufficiently ſettled by Knowledge, and mature Conſideration, and Experience, and an entire Love of God and Goodneſs; the beſt thing They can do, is to keep at a Diſtance from Evil. To mingle with vicious Company and Examples is too dangerous an Experiment for Them to make. The beſt Intentions will not be ſecurity ſufficient for Perſons not qualified to perſevere in them. Good Principles too often degenerate! And, though it be great Charity to endeavour at the reforming of Others, yet it is great Imprudence to attempt what we are not a Match for. Every Man therefore ſhould firſt meaſure his own Srength, and not hazard the being beaten off from his own Stedfaſtneſs. For, I doubt, it is no new thing, for unwary Men, who labour to prevent a Friend's falling down the Precipice, and

venture too near the brink to ſave him; to be pull'd in with him, and ſo for Both to periſh together in their Folly.

Again. Our Lord, conſider'd in his Publick Capacity, proves, that Some are even bound, upon ſome Occaſions, not to decline the Company of Vicious Men. That is, ſuch as reſemble Him in that Capacity. And ſuch particularly are the Miniſters of the Goſpel. For They too are Phyſicians of Souls, They too are ſent to call Sinners to Repentance. Therefore for theſe abſolutely to refuſe ſuch Converſation, is to withdraw from their Duty, and to neglect the beſt Opportunities of performing the great Truſt given them in charge. It is not by Preaching and publick Inſtruction only, that Sinners are won over to the Principles of Truth and Soberneſs; but by private Admonitions, by gentle and ſeaſonable Reproofs; by applying our Doctrines to the reſpective Caſes of Men more pertinently and cloſely, than a Diſcourſe from the Pulpit can, in the nature of the thing, admit. It is by inſinuating ourſelves into their good Opinion, gaining upon their Affections by Degrees, watching their ſofter Hours, and the moſt favourable Seaſons of doing them good: And ſo ſaying many things Alone, which would not be received, or not make the ſame ſucceſsful Impreſſions, at another Time and Place. And every one, who at all reflects upon the Conſtitution of Mankind in general, muſt needs diſcern the Uſefulneſs of theſe holy Arts. For Men naturally love to be treated with Reſpect; But Sourneſs of Spirit and an upbraiding Haughtineſs of Behaviour do as naturally beget Diſlike. And Many will be prevailed upon by the Charms of Courteſy and Condeſcenſion, and Chriſtian Compaſſion prudently apply'd; who would perfectly fly off, and be but more provoked, more deſperately hardened, by a Phariſaical Diſdain, or Supercilious Contempt. The Wickedneſs and Danger of our Brethren calls for Tenderneſs, and Pity

Pity, and a helping Hand. But, even when Indignation and Severity become neceſſary, conſtant Care muſt be taken, that this do not ſavour of Spiritual Pride. We ought to hate Mens Vices with an irreconcileable Hatred; but this muſt be ſo temper'd, that it do not obſtruct their Reformation, by betraying us to Inſolent and Scornful Behaviour toward thoſe who commit ſuch Wickedneſs. And therefore the ſame Apoſtle, who forbids having ſuch Familiarities with Evil Men, as might encourage them in their Sins; does not forget to command withal, that *we ſhould not count ſuch Men as Enemies, but admoniſh them as Brethren.* 2 Theſſ. iii. 15.

Secondly, The Conſideration of the Perſons, whom our Lord admitted to ſuch Freedoms with him, ſuggeſts to us Another very uſeful Rule for governing our Behaviour in the preſent Caſe. They were *Publicans and Sinners* indeed, Men of very ill Converſation and infamous Character: But then they were ſuch as thruſt themſelves upon Chriſt, coveted to hear him, were eager to be inſtructed, and at this time (moſt probably moved with the Call of their old Companion St. *Matthew*) were deſirous to partake of like Grace and Reformation themſelves. Now this plainly intimates to us, that there is a mighty Difference between ſeeking the Company of wicked Men, and ſuffering it only; between diſdaining them, and taking delight in them. And again, that there is a Diſtinction to be made between Thoſe, who, though Bad, yet are willing to be Better; and Others, who are perverſe and unperſuadable, and even glory in their Shame. None but ill Men can make ill Men their Choice. To prefer and take Pleaſure in ſuch above others is a Demonſtration that our Inclinations are naught. For only diſtemper'd Palates can find an agreeable Reliſh in corrupt and filthy, obſcene or profane Communication. But to endure ſuch Perſons for their own Profit, and in order to

bring them off from their Follies, is a Mortification to our ſelves, which, in tenderneſs to Souls under manifeſt hazard of Eternal Ruin, becomes us very well.

So again, When ſuch Wretches are fierce and intractable, heady and high-minded, profeſs'd Contemners and Revilers of God and every thing that is ſacred: Though here the Rule of coming out from Them, who will not ſuffer any Good to be done upon them, do certainly hold: Yet where Sinners are ſadly ſenſible of their Danger, or their Ignorance, and would gladly improve by our Company; God forbid, that the blackeſt and moſt ſcandalous Offences ſhould make us deſpiſe and neglect them. We ſhould look upon ſuch Advances, as very happy Occaſions; and account it a great Matter, and a very promiſing Beginning, that they are content to hear Reaſon, and have any Deſires of Knowing and Doing better. And theſe Deſires we ought by all means to cheriſh, and to gratify, by enlightning their dark Minds; contending patiently with their Prejudices; condeſcending, as much as fairly we may, to their Infirmities; and thinking our ſelves exceeding well employed, if we can, though but by ſlow Degrees, weaken the Power of vicious Cuſtoms, reſtrain them from ſome Acts at leaſt of Licentiouſneſs, and plant the Seeds of Virtue in their ſtead. When we have found, that this cannot be done; it is then time enough to ſhake them off, and to ſhew them, that we will not give countenance to, be Partakers with them in, their Sins. But ſo long as they give us any Hopes of reclaiming them; then, though we ſhould run ſome riſque of having our Conduct miſinterpreted, as our great Maſter's here was; yet even ſo, nothing ſhould ſeem too much, no Condeſcenſion too great, to compaſs ſo bleſſed a Deſign, as the ſaving thoſe Souls from Death and the Power of Satan, who uſed to be *taken Captive by him at his Will.* For,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, We muſt obſerve the End our Saviour aim'd at by this Behaviour. He converſed with Sinners, for the very ſame Purpoſe that Others avoided them for. Which was, to bring them off from the Evil of their Doings, and to promote Repentance and Holineſs of Life. And the keeping this End conſtantly in view will direct us, in what Manner, and with what Limitations, wicked Men are to be kept Company with. That is, ſo as may not hurt our Selves, and yet may be profitable for Them. Never to mingle with ſuch Men is neither poſſible, nor convenient. Nature, and Relation, and Intereſt, and Many both private and publick Engagements, may bring us under a Neceſſity of dealing and converſing with, and paying Civil Reſpects to, very profligate Perſons. For a Man's being wicked will not excuſe our forgetting, that he is a Father, or a Brother, or a Superior, or uſeful to our Own, or to the Common Good. But, where ſuch a one hath the moſt that can be ſuppoſed to recommend him to us; ſurely we may, and ſhould ſo order the Matter, that he may underſtand, how much yet dearer and more acceptable he would be, if his Virtues did alſo conſpire to engage our Affection and Eſteem for him. In fine, We ſhould court the Acquaintance of the Good only for our Own ſakes; If we ſeek that of Ill Men, it ſhould be purely for Their ſakes. And if ſuch be refractory, and will reap no Benefit by us; the moſt we can do, is to bear them. Nor may we ſo far bear them neither, as to ſeem in any Degree ſatisfied with their Faults. We ſhould rebuke them, where it can be properly done; And, where it cannot, we ſhould ſhew all thoſe Marks of Sorrow and Diſpleaſure, which can become Our Character and Theirs. But This Caution muſt conſtantly be obſerved: For Saucineſs and Ill Manners are not like to make Converts; and ſuch a Zeal will find as little Succeſs, as it brings Knowledge.

The Conſiderations I have ſpoken to, if duly weighed and practiſed, will ſo moderate and direct our Proceedings, that we ſhall keep the middle way, between the Haughtineſs of the Phariſee, and the Negligence of the Diſſolute and Prophane. We ſhall eat with Sinners, without defiling ourſelves by their Acquaintance. We ſhall not only ſave our Own Souls, but Theirs too. We ſhall cheriſh the Penitent, and not encourage the Abandoned and Obſtinate. We ſhall ſo ſatisfy the Obligations of Society, as at the ſame time to preſerve thoſe of Religion entire. And, inſtead of falling in, and being borne down, with the Torrent of Ungodlineſs; we ſhall *walk warily in theſe dangerous Days*, move others to earneſt and ſpeedy Repentance, and become *burning and ſhining Lights, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation.*

St. MICHAEL *and* ALL ANGELS.

The COLLECT.

Pſal. xxxiv. 7. —xci. 11, 12. Matth. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14.

O Everlaſting God, who haſt ordained and conſtituted the Services of Angels and Men in a wonderful Order; mercifully grant, that as thy holy Angels alway do thee Service in Heaven; ſo by thy Appointment they may ſuccour and defend us on Earth, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

For the EPISTLE.

Rev. xii. 7.

7. *THere was war in heaven; Michael and his Angels fought againſt the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels:*

8. *And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

9. *And the great dragon was caſt out, that old ſerpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was caſt out into the earth, and his angels were caſt out with him.*

10. *And I heard a loud voice ſaying in heaven, Now is come ſalvation, and ſtrength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Chriſt: for the accuſer of our brethren*

brethren is caſt down, which accuſed them before our God day and night.

11. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their Teſtimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

12. *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the ſea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, becauſe he knoweth that he hath but a ſhort time.*

COMMENT.

IN ſpeaking to this Scripture, I ſhall lay before my Reader the ſeveral Interpretations of Learned Men upon it; and Then make ſuch Uſe of Theſe, as may be moſt proper and practical.

But, before we proceed to either of Theſe, it is fit to obſerve One Point, wherein they ſeem All to agree. Which is, that *Michael*, and the Squadrons under his Command, are thoſe good Angels, whoſe Miniſtry God hath been all along pleaſed to employ, for the Benefit and Defence of his People. That Archangel, according to the ancient Traditions of the Jews, is generally deſcribed, as the Patron and Conducter of *Iſrael* under the Law. And he is here underſtood, as one conſtantly intent upon performing the like kind Offices to the Spiritual *Iſrael*, under the Goſpel.

On the other hand: *Satan*, or the Devil, hath been as conſtantly repreſented for the Prince of thoſe Evil Angels, who, *having fallen from their firſt Eſtate* of Holineſs and Bliſs, act in direct Oppoſition to that Other Prince and his Good Angels. Their conſtant Buſineſs is to contrive all the Miſchief and Calamities that poſſibly they can, to the Church and People of God. In order to effect which, they neglect no Means or Opportunities, of which their Condition renders them capable, to corrupt the Principles and Practices of Mankind; thereby to deprive them of the Divine Favour and Protection, and make them the juſt Objects

of his Diſpleaſure and Wrath, in whoſe Fatherly Care and Affection all their Safety and Happineſs conſiſts.

In purſuance of theſe Notions, common to all Interpreters, Some have looked upon this Paſſage to be wholly Allegorical. By *Heaven*, underſtanding good Chriſtians: So called, becauſe their Affections and Converſation already are, as they hope their Souls and Bodies will one Day be and reign for ever, in Heaven. By *War in Heaven*, they mean the Temptations to Sin, during the Warfare of theſe good Men here below: Which the Powers of Darkneſs perpetually ſuggeſt and promote; while Thoſe of Light labour, with equal Induſtry, to prevent and defeat them. By the *Devil being caſt out, and having no more place in Heaven*, they ſuppoſe to be meant, the Overthrow of Vice and Error, the happy and wonderful Improvement of Knowledge and Virtue; But particularly the utter Extirpation of Idolatry, and of all thoſe Diabolical Superſtitions and Beſtialities, which made ſo great a part of the Heathen Worſhip, by the Propagation and Progreſs of the Chriſtian Faith. All which St. *John* deſcribes, as a Victory obtained *by the Blood of the Lamb, by the Word of Teſtimony, and not loving their Lives unto the Death*: Becauſe Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, as the Saviour and Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, the pure Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Conſtancy of thoſe Sufferings and Perſecutions endured for the ſake of the Truth, were the Inſtruments, whereby this glorious Change was wrought. A natural Conſequence whereof are thoſe Praiſes and Exultations of the Heavenly Powers, who rejoice in the Happineſs of Us their Fellow-Creatures: And a charitable Commiſeration of the unconverted World. The groſs and carnal, the tumultuous and fluctuating State of whoſe Minds are, by an elegant Metaphor, ſtiled *the Earth and*

Zeger. *Ver.* 7.

Ver. 8.

Ver. 11.

Ver. 10—12.

and the Sea, upon whom the Evil Spirits do ſtill exerciſe a leſs controuled Dominion.

Others apply this Paſſage to the celebrated Defeat of *Simon Magus* at *Rome*: That *Dragon*, as St. *Cyril* calls him, The Ring-leader and firſt Head of Hereſy; who gave out, That he was the ſame God, that appeared at giving the Law in Mount *Sinai*, and had now again exhibited himſelf in the Perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*. As ſuch, he required the Adoration of his Followers; and prevailed at *Rome* ſo far, as, in the Reign of *Claudius*, to have a Statue erected to his Honour: But in that of *Nero*, he was openly confronted by St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*; and having, as a Proof of his Divine Power, promiſed to fly in the Air upon a fiery Chariot; theſe two Apoſtles, did by their Prayers ſo confound his Sorceries, that he fell in the Preſence of the People, broke his Legs, retired to *Brunda*, and there, not able any longer to ſupport the Pain and Shame this vain Experiment had coſt him, he threw himſelf from the top of an Houſe, and periſhed in Deſpair. This Conqueſt of the Impoſtor opened the Eyes of many, and brought them over to a reſolute Confeſſion of the Faith, notwithſtanding Chriſtianity at that time lay under the ſevereſt Interdicts.

Dr. Hammond. Grotius. Catech. vi. 9.

Arnob. *adv. Gent.* L. II.

This Contention therefore between Idolatry and Chriſtianity, in the Perſons and Miracles of *Simon* and the *Apoſtles*, is thought to be deſigned here by the reſpective Patrons of thoſe Cauſes, *Michael* and the *Dragon*, fighting with each other: The Converſions which followed hereupon, and the Confuſion of *Simon*'s Adherents, are the *caſting out of that Dragon*, and *Eſtabliſhment of the Kingdom and Power of Chriſt*. The falſe Accuſation of the Brethren is thought to mean the Scandal brought upon Chriſtianity, by that Gnoſtick Principle

Ver. 7, 8.

Ver. 9. 10.

Principle and Practice of renouncing Chriſt in time of Danger: The overcoming this by *the Blood of the Lamb*, and *the Lives not loved unto Death*, to import the Vindication of the Chriſtian Doctrines, by ſacrificing themſelves, in Teſtimony to the Truth of them: And the *great Wrath of the Devil*, that terrible Perſecution; To which, in Revenge for ſo notable a Defeat, he inſtigated *Nero* ſhortly after; and in which, as hath been formerly remark'd, St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, the Inſtruments of this Defeat, were both put to Death.

Ver. 11.

Ver. 12.

See St. Paul *and St.* Peter's *Day.*

Others again, underſtanding by the *Woman in Heaven*, (*Ver.* 1.) the Chriſtian Church; and by the *Man child brought forth by her, who ſhould rule all Nations*, (*Ver.* 5.) the firſt Chriſtian Emperor; do ſuppoſe the Paſſage now in hand to denote the State of the Chriſtian Religion and its Profeſſors; from the firſt Beginnings of it after our Lord's Aſcenſion, anſwering to the time of Conception and Pregnancy, to the Advancement of *Conſtantine*, his Conqueſts over the other Tyrants and *Licinius*, and the Edicts of Liberty and Favour to the Chriſtians, anſwering to the *Birth* of this Man-child. According to this Senſe, *The War in Heaven* implies all the Struggles of the Primitive Saints with Enemies and Perſecutors; *Michael and his Angels*, the Confeſſors of, and Champions for, the Goſpel; *The Dragon and his Angels*, the Idolatrous and Bloody Tyrants of *Rome* Heathen; and all other Perſecutors of Chriſt in his Members: The *Caſting out this Dragon* was the Overthrow of Idolatry, when Pagans loſt the Throne: The *Accuſations* of the *Brethren*, thoſe abominable but altogether groundleſs Calumnies, caſt by the Worſhippers and Slaves of the Dragon upon the Chriſtians and their Religion; Which made the many noble Apologies, written by the Fathers, ſo neceſſary. And *the Wrath of*

Mr. Mede. Whiſton.

the

the Devil, when thus ſubdued, exerted it ſelf in the Violence of ſome ſucceeding Emperors, the Hereſies and Diſcords ſown among Chriſtians, and all the Miſeries conſequent upon the Inundation of Barbarous Nations, which tore in pieces the *Roman* Empire itſelf.

4. The *Laſt* Conſtruction of this Place that I ſhall mention is Theirs, who apply it, in the moſt Literal Senſe, to the Expulſion of the Devil and his Angels from the Seats of Light and Bliſs, after their Rebellion againſt God. The Crime, whereof the Devil was guilty originally, ſeems from ſeveral Paſſages of Scripture to have been Pride: An Over-value of, and too great Self-complacency in, the Excellencies of his Nature and Condition. Such as, inſtead of diſpoſing him to a grateful Obedience, lifted up his Mind to a vain Affectation of Equality with God, at leaſt Independence upon the Giver and Source of all his Good. To this firſt of all Tranſgreſſions ſome have applied the Son of *Sirach*'s Words; *The beginning of Pride is, when one departeth from God, and his Heart is turned away from his Maker. For Pride is* or (for ſo it may be rendred) *was the beginning of Sin:* And thoſe of St. *Paul*, who gives this Reaſon, why a *Novice* ought not to be made a *Biſhop, leſt being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil*; that is, from reſembling the Devil in his Fault, come to reſemble him in his Puniſhment. The ſame Application hath been made of two Prophecies in *Iſaiah*, and *Ezekiel*: For although the Hiſtorical Senſe of the Former do doubtleſs concern *Nebuchadnezzar*; yet He there, and the Prince of *Tyre* in the Latter, are plainly deſcribed with ſuch Marks of Elation, as exactly and in their Literal Senſe, agree with what ancient Tradition hath delivered down, as a received Opinion concerning the Fallen Angels. And indeed the Devil's aſpiring after Equality with God was abundantly

Eccluſ. x. 12, 13.

1 Tim. iii. 6.

Iſai. xiv. Ezek. xxviii.

abundantly manifeſted afterwards, in his tempting Men chiefly to Idolatry; that ſo, by their falſe Worſhip of him, this Vanity might, on Earth at leaſt, be gratified.

Now That Tempting, and Corrupting of Mankind, are Effects of the *Wrath* mentioned *Ver.* 12. Whereby the Ancient Writers underſtand his Envy to have been a *Second* Crime, naturally ſubſequent to the Former. The Object of this Envy, they all conſent, is *Mankind*: But about the Occaſion that provoked it, there is ſome Difference. Some impute it to God's making this Creature, taken out of the Duſt of the Earth, after his *own Image*; and giving him Dominion over his Fellow-Creatures here below. Others, to God's deſigning Heaven and Immortality, and the Enjoyment of thoſe Bliſsful Glories of the Divine Preſence for Mankind, as a Supply of Inhabitants, when He and his wicked Accomplices had for their Offence, been caſt out. Others will have it to proceed from an Indignation, conceived at the unſpeakable Honour intended us, in the Redemption of the World. When the Son, *God bleſſed for ever*, ſhould *not take upon him the Nature of Angels, but ſhould take upon him the Seed of Abraham:* That, in Proſpect of This, he rebelled firſt in Heaven; and hath, in Reſentment for its being done, ever ſince employ'd his utmoſt Efforts upon Earth, to counter-work and interrupt the Proſperity and Peace of Chriſt's Kingdom. So differently does Pride judge of Greatneſs, from what in Truth it is; For Goodneſs and Love are the truly great Accompliſhments of an Intelligent Mind. Infinitely more ſo, than Power, and all the formidable Appearances, which awful Diſtance and Diſdain can produce. As therefore the Kindneſs and tender Compaſſion, ſo likewiſe the Majeſty and unconceivable Excellencies of God never ſhone ſo bright, as

Iren. *L.* IV. *Cap.* 78. Tertul. *de Patient.*

See Petav. *Dogm. T.* III. *L.* III. *C.* II. *S.* 12.

Rom. ix. 5. Hebr. ii. 16.

in

in the Condeſcenſions of his Son Incarnate. To be born, and live meanly, and die ignominiouſly, for the Sins of them, who were thus made Brethren of the ſame Race and Blood, was unparallelled Greatneſs, becauſe unparallelled Goodneſs. It was an Honour done to Human Nature, at which the Good Angels rejoice: A Myſtery, which, we are told, they *deſire* and *delight to look into*: A Mercy, *promiſed before the World began*; And conſequently declared, and communicated to ſome Beings, before the Creation of Mankind; And a Diſpenſation, which ſhould not, and, except when looked upon by evil Angels through the falſe Glaſſes of Pride and Envy, could not be judged, either an Injury to the Angelical Nature, or an Indignity to the Divine.

1 Pet. i. 12.
2 Tim. i. 9.
Tit. i. 2.

And yet againſt this Diſpenſation, only as ſuch, the Malice and Rage of theſe fallen Angels is very probably thought to ſet it ſelf. At leaſt, ſince that Fall, we know how the Caſe ſtands. Our Lord and his Apoſtles have frequently declared the irreconcileable Enmity between the Kingdom of *Chriſt*, and that of *Satan*: The Neceſſity of renouncing all Faith and Friendſhip with the One, whenſoever we enter into Covenant with the Other; The Treachery, and Subtilty, and indefatigable Application of our Common Adverſary; The Danger of being diſmayed by the Roarings of this *devouring Lion*, and the no leſs Danger of being beguiled by the counterfeit Beauties of this pretended *Angel of Light*. In ſhort, The Faith and Practice of the Chriſtian Religion is the ſure Deſtruction of his Power; and of all the wicked Deſigns he labours to advance by it. And therefore this, 'tis manifeſt, he does his utmoſt to obſtruct; by Perſecutions and Calumnies from without; by Heretical Doctrines

Matth. xii. 26.
——vi. 24.
2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.
1 Pet. v. 8.
2 Cor. xi. 3.
Ver. 14.

ctrines and Uncharitable Diviſions within; by all the Impudence of Profaneneſs and Irreligion, Deiſm and Scepticiſm, and every Art that may be of ſervice, for invalidating the Authority, and perverting the Senſe of Scripture. As knowing, if the Glory of the Goſpel, and the Myſteries of our Redemption, can be eclipſed and brought into Contempt; that the Love of God will wax Cold, and the Incentives to Piety and Virtue built upon theſe Doctrines, as on their proper Foundation, muſt needs be ſhaken and fall with Them. So certainly may we gather, whoſe Inſtruments They are, and what deſign they carry on, who pour out their Invectives upon the Chriſtian Inſtitution; and, by perſuading us out of the Belief, would rob us of the Benefits, of our Lord's Incarnation, Satisfaction, and Sacrifice for Sins; and of the Ordinances by him appointed, as Means and Conditions for conveying to each of us reſpectively a Perſonal Right, in the mighty things done in behalf of, and of ſufficient Virtue for, all Mankind in common.

Mean while, The only poſſible Method for baffling the Attempts made againſt the Cauſe of Religion in general, and the Salvation of each Man in particular, is that mentioned here: *The Blood of the Lamb, the Word of Teſtimony, and Lives not loved unto Death.* Affiance in our Saviour's Sufferings, A firm Belief of his Goſpel, And reſiſting, if occaſion be, even unto Blood for the Truth's Sake: Theſe are the Weapons of our Spiritual Warfare, by the force of Theſe, Chriſtianity hath ſuſtained itſelf, preſerv'd its Purity, triumph'd over both the Frauds of its Corruptors and the Cruelties of its Perſecutors: And will, we truſt, continue ſo to do to the World's end.

Undertaking to be wiſe in Matters of Religion, beyond that which is written, can be neither ſafe nor becoming. But what hath been delivered on this Subject will, I hope, be readily acquitted both of Hazard

and

and Immodeſty. For, that ſome of the *Angels* did *ſin*, and *were caſt out of Heaven*, the Scripture is expreſs. The Particulars of their Rebellion and Puniſhment (being a Subject of no great uſe or concern to us) are not indeed deſcribed at large. The ſeveral Alluſions to, and Applications of, this Matter to Other Subjects, do however imply, and preſuppoſe a Senſe of literal and hiſtorical Truth, as their Baſis and Support. And the Quality and Occaſion of the Crimes, which ſunk them into Hell, ſeem, if not plain and neceſſary, yet at leaſt probable and fair Deductions, from the hints and touches left us in Holy Writ. Which, how ſlight and remote ſoever, will yet bear us out, I am ſure, in the few practical Reflections, with which I am now about to conclude this Diſcourſe. 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

Firſt, The never-ceaſing Malice of the Devil and his Angels, which the former Interpretations of this Scripture took notice of, ſhould awaken every Man's care, and put all Chriſtians upon their guard, againſt ſo active and powerful an Enemy. What Succours and Encouragements may be expected in theſe Combats, I ſhall have occaſion to obſerve, upon the Goſpel of the Day. My deſign at preſent is to excite Mens Diligence, from the Conſideration of their Danger, and the Example of their Enemies. And how can we be ſecure, after ſo many Monuments of Souls loſt and undone, purely by flattering themſelves with an imaginary Safety? And why ſhould Our Concern and Endeavours be leſs zealous in our own Preſervation, than thoſe of our Adverſaries are, to compaſs our Deſtruction? The Devil hath no real Profit in his Pains, nor is there any Fruit poſſible to be reaped from them, ſave only the barbarous Joy of having more Companions in his Guilt and Miſery: But We fight for Heaven and Happineſs, Our All is at ſtake; and no Middle State left us, between triumphing in Glory and lamenting our Defeat in Torments, everlaſting.

Again,

Again, As This Conſideration ſhould make vigilant for our Selves, ſo ſhould it, for the Truth of Religion, and the People of God in general. Vice of all kinds is moſt effectually introduced, by looſening and debauching Men in their Principles. And as ill Morals put Men upon corrupting the Faith; ſo Faith, once corrupted, naturally degenerates into profligate Converſation. In thoſe Hereſies particularly, which pervert the Doctrines of our Lord's Incarnation and Satisfaction, the very Sinews of Piety are cut aſunder, by reſtraining the Benefit of the Meſſiah's Coming to Inſtruction and Example only. This muſt needs damp the Gratitude and Ardent Zeal, the Humble Adoration and Holy Wonder, ariſing from the Contemplations of God Incarnate, emptying himſelf for our ſakes. This makes but poor Proviſion againſt the Reproaches of Guilt, and diſmal Apprehenſions of future Puniſhment; in compariſon of that Peace of Conſcience, which penitent Sinners find from a firm reliance on the Merits and Acceptance of an All-ſufficient Sacrifice offered in their ſtead. This (once more) unties the ſtrongeſt Band of Love, and gives up the nobleſt and moſt unanſwerable Motive to mutual and generous Beneficence among Men; by eluding the force of ſuch Texts as theſe, *Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.* And, *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, becauſe he laid down His Life for Us, and we ought to lay down Our Lives for the Brethren.*

1 John iv. 11.

Ch. iii. 16.

So great account muſt the Enemy of God and all Goodneſs needs find, in ſowing the Seeds of Hereſy: And ſo falſe is that Suggeſtion of His, (for it ought to be look'd on as no better) that the Articles of our Faith are merely Speculative Notions, without uſe or importance for the improvement of our Virtue. Whereas it were eaſy, I conceive, to ſhew, that Every one of thoſe Myſteries, treated with ſo much ſcorn in theſe Days

Days of Libertiniſm, when purſu'd through all its juſt Conſequences, is of mighty influence; that Each hath a direct tendency to regulating the Manners and Paſſions of Mankind; whether we conſider them in their private Capacities, or as united in Societies. Sad Experience hath proved, how miſerably the Peace of the World hath been diſturbed by Corruptions in points of Belief; how cloſe they have ever been follow'd by ſcandalous Corruption of Manners; and how much greater Prejudice was done to the Reputation and true Spirit of Chriſtianity by this Artifice, than ever the continu'd Perſecutions of Three Hundred Years were able to effect before. All which renders St. *Jude*'s Exhortation of univerſal and perpetual Obligation; that *we ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered to the Saints.* Jude 3. The Truth of Religion is a common Cauſe, the beſt and moſt concerning Cauſe of any. When therefore This is inſulted and broke in upon; all its Profeſſors ſhould come forth, as one Man, in the defence of it. Neutrality and Indifference are more blameable here, than in any diſpute of Temporal Rights whatſoever. And They, who under any ſpecious Pretences, ſit ſtill; and do not, in their reſpective Stations, exert a vigorous Zeal in diſcountenancing, oppoſing, ſuppreſſing the Inſolence and Impiety of profane and licentious Revilers of Chriſt and his Inſtitution, are Enemies to the Publick; Abetters of the Devil and his Inſtruments; and can never anſwer ſuch Lukewarmneſs, either to the Body of which they are Members in this World, or to God and their own Conſciences in the Next.

2. The Laſt and Literal Senſe of this Scripture, (which, by referring it to the Fall of the Angels, ſeems beſt to anſwer the Church's deſign in the uſe of it on this Feſtival) may be ſerviceable to us in ſeveral Reſpects.

As *Firſt*, (for that cannot be inculcated too often) By making us duly ſenſible of the Spiritual Hazards, to

which we ſtand expoſed. If Beings ſo far ſuperior to Us in Wiſdom and Power; Diſengaged from ſuch Bodies and their Affections, as we bear about with us; Happy in the Preſence of God, and highly advanced in the Court of Heaven: If Theſe Glorious Spirits, provoked by no ill Perſuaſion or Example from without, did yet ſin; and ſo highly incenſe Almighty God, as by Him to be laid under an irrecoverable Decree to everlaſting Darkneſs and Torments: How ſhould We, poor Worms, betray our deluded Souls, by vain Imaginations of Safety, and the Careleſneſs naturally conſequent thereupon? We, whoſe very Wiſdom is Folly, and our Strength Weakneſs? We, who, when we would riſe above the World and its Vanities, find our ſelves dragg'd back again, and faſten'd down, by the Fleſh and the weight of its Appetites: We, who, in this Conflict between Spirit and Senſe, are ſituated in the Enemy's Country, amidſt Stratagems and Ambuſcades; obliged to be daily converſant with the Inſtruments and Occaſions of our Ruin; and ſupported in the Fight, not by preſent Fruition, but diſtant Proſpects only, of a Happineſs, which, while in this ſtate of Trial, it is our Virtue, and our Defence, continually to thirſt and pant after? But eſpecially We, who, beſides the original Weakneſs of our Minds, the natural Tendency of Bodily Inclinations, the conſtant Impreſſion of Objects from without, the corrupt Biaſs of our now depraved State, and the never-ceaſing Sollicitations of a Tempter, who takes the advantage of all the reſt againſt us: How monſtrouſly ſtupid ſhould We be, to live without Thought, without Apprehenſion of the Death hanging over our Heads, when inſtructed by the diſmal Fate of an Order of Beings, ſo much more likely to ſtand, and yet made ſo miſerable by their Fall?

So reaſonable and neceſſary it is, that the Fate of Evil Angels ſhould rouze us out of Sleep, and quicken our Care. But then, to render that Care effectual, it

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is no leſs neceſſary to reflect upon their Fault too, and what it was that cauſed Them to fall. Now this, we have ſeen, was Pride. The Properties whereof are, An inordinate Value of any real or ſuppoſed Excellencies, by attributing the Merit, the Praiſe of them, to one's ſelf; Forgetfulneſs of, and Unthankfulneſs to, the Author and Giver of them; Diſcontent with the preſent State of things; Aſpiring and graſping after more and higher, as his ſuppoſed due; and Envy at the Advantages of all Others. By which vile Complication of Qualities, it is manifeſt, that Pride hath, in its own Nature, the Seeds and Principles of Rebellion, and is the Source of Malice, Contention, and every evil Work.

It ſhould raiſe in us a yet greater Deteſtation of this Vice, that not Angels only, but Mankind alſo fell by it. The aſpiring to be like Gods, and affecting to know what God thought fit to be concealed from them, was the prevailing Temptation urged by Him, who, from his own Experience, had learnt on what ſide a Rational Soul is moſt ſucceſsfully attacked. The ſame Diſdain of continuing Ignorant in matters above our Comprehenſion, hath been the bitter Root of all the Hereſies and Schiſms, that ever infeſted the Church. And if the Fomenters of theſe have at any time been Perſons of a ſevere Converſation, yet will not even This, break the force of that Maxim; That the Indulgence of Vicious Diſpoſitions is the true Cauſe of Corrupt Doctrines. For it is a great Miſtake, to think all thoſe Men Virtuous, who are not ſunk into Carnality or Exceſs. Theſe indeed have more of the Beaſt, and are Sins of the Body. But the Sins of the Mind have more of Danger, though uſually leſs of Reproach. And They were undone, by ſtriving to be more than Angels; whoſe Nature was not capable of the Vices, which make Us leſs than Men. Vanity, Self-conceit, and not ſubmitting to allow any Other wiſer and better than themſelves, could debauch even Heavenly Beings.

And Earth was made a Scene of Miſery, by an Inordinate Deſire of That, which to deſire regularly, and to poſſeſs humbly, is the greateſt Accompliſhment of a Wiſe and Good Man. So far are They from being truly wiſe or mortified, who are yet untaught to be content with *thinking ſoberly*, and have not ceaſed to be *wiſe in their own conceits*. So much ought we to be upon our guard againſt the Extravagancies of this Vice; So careful to cruſh this Cockatrice in the Egg, which extracts Poiſon out of our very Virtues, could ſhed its Venom even in Heaven, and, by a moſt pernicious Fruitfulneſs, hath engendered and propagated Sin and Deſtruction, over all Parts and Ages of the World.

But, *Thirdly*, While we contemplate the Wiſdom and Juſtice of God, in permitting and puniſhing the Sin of Evil Angels, and all the dire Effects of their Malice to Mankind; Let us by no means forget the difference his Mercy hath put between Their Caſe, and that of Sinners tempted by them. 'Tis true, They offended againſt a Light infinitely clearer, without the Impulſe of any Suggeſter; and conſequently they ſinned with more Perverſeneſs, as well as baſer Ingratitude. But all theſe, and any other Aggravations notwithſtanding, it is to the free and unbounded Mercy of God, that we owe the Redemption of Men: while Spirits, once ſo much higher in Dignity, and ſo much more nearly allied to the Divine Nature, are left under hopeleſs and irrecoverable Condemnation. For, Who can ſufficiently adore the Kindneſs and Compaſſion, which paſſed by this Glorious Order of Beings, and did not diſdain to aſſume the Fleſh and Blood of poor feeble Mortals into the Godhead; that, by becoming One of Them, he might exalt them to that State, from which their Betters by Trangreſſion fell?

Their Hearts, which turned themſelves away from God, are finally left in that Alienation. Our Alienation is choſen too; but yet we are not given over to Sin.

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The Spirit of God ſtrives with Us, and, by his ſweet Attractives, regulates our Affections when warped, helps us to be ſenſible of and ſorry for our Follies, and brings the Prodigals back to their right Mind. One Fault drove them out of the Beatific Preſence of God; but that One (the Grace of Repentance not being granted) productive of infinite More, and ſo at once the Increaſe both of their Guilt and Miſery: We after Many may obtain an Entrance there: And though our *Sins* be *red as Crimſon, and more than the Hairs of our Head*; yet may they be *white as Snow*, when waſhed in that *Blood of the Lamb*, by which the Victory was gained over the Devil and his Accomplices, making *War in Heaven:* That Blood, which overcomes him, no leſs in the Quality of Our Enemy, than God's.

Iſaiah i. 18. Pſal. xl. 12.

Rev. xii. 7. —11.

It is true, as Such, he is not only his Own, but to the utmoſt of his Ability, Our Deſtroyer. And how perilous our Condition is upon that Account, hath been already noted. But, though Earth be now become the Seat of War, and our whole Life a Seaſon of perpetual Action: Though our Adverſary be mighty, and our frail Selves by no means a Match for him: Yet are we not left in His, no, nor (Bleſſed be God) altogether in our Own hands. Powerful Auxiliaries are appointed to ſuſtain us; Equal in Strength and Sagacity to the Foes we combat with. But the Quality and Service of the Heavenly Hoſts, the great Variety of good Offices done by them, and the Uſes proper to be made of their Readineſs to aſſiſt in our Extremities, I forbear to ſay more of here; becauſe theſe are Subjects reſerved for a particular Conſideration, upon the Goſpel for this Day.

Goſp. I. Sund. *in* Lent. *Epiſt. St.* Philip *and* Jacob.

The Gospel.

Matt. xviii. 1.

1. *AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

2. *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.*

3. *And said, verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

4. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

5. *And whoso shall receive one such little child, in my name, receiveth me.*

6. *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

7. *Woe unto the World because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.*

8. *Wherefore if thy hand or foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.*

9. *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

10. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

COMMENT.

THAT part of the Scripture now before us, which comes up to our present purpose, and seems to have entitled it to a part in the Service for this Day, I take to lie in those words of our Saviour, at the *Tenth Verse: Take heed that ye despise not one of these Little ones; for I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Heaven.*

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In order to a right underſtanding whereof it will be neceſſary to ſatisfy *Three* Enquiries, which may ſupply the place of a Paraphraſe upon the Whole. For it cannot be expected, that we ſhould bear due Reſpect to the Command contained there, till it be made appear,

I. *Firſt*, Who the *Little ones* are mentioned here.

II. *Secondly*, What is meant by *Deſpiſing* them.

III. *Thirdly*, And eſpecially, wherein The Force of that Reaſon conſiſts, for which it is ſaid we ought not ſo to do, *viz.* becauſe in *Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of Almighty God.*

I. *Firſt* then, Let us examine, Who thoſe *Little ones* are, which our Bleſſed Saviour, with ſo much Solemnity, forbids us to treat any of with Contempt; *Take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe Little ones.*

We read, in the beginning of this Chapter, that the Diſciples applied themſelves to *Jeſus*, with a Deſire to be reſolved, *Who is the Greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Which Queſtion, proceeding from an ambitious Strife and Deſire of Pre-eminence above their Brethren, our Lord was willing to rebuke, by giving them a ſenſible Repreſentation of the Excellencies, which diſtinguiſh Men under the Goſpel State. He therefore *called a little Child*, and *ſet* him in the midſt *of them*, as a Pattern to his Diſciples. And, leſt they ſhould neglect to make the Application, He declares expreſly, That the Reſemblance of ſuch Infant Innocence, in Meekneſs, and Gentleneſs, and harmleſs Simplicity of Mind, was a proper and neceſſary Qualification for his Kingdom: That, however ſuch a Temper might fail of Eſteem, or perhaps meet with Deriſion and Reproach among Men; yet God, he ſays, hath a true Value and very high Regard for it. Hence it muſt follow; that they ought to be exceeding careful not to offend or deſpiſe the meaneſt, moſt deſpicable Chriſtians; whom, for their Likeneſs to that Child, *Ver.* 2.

then propounded to them for an Example, he does both here, and at the *Sixth Verſe*, diſtinguiſh by the Title of *Little ones*; and thoſe *Little ones which believe in Him*.

II. The *Next* thing therefore to be conſidered is, What our Lord intends by *Deſpiſing* theſe meek and lowly Chriſtians. And This is likewiſe eaſy to be gathered from thoſe parts of the Diſcourſe that went before. Our Saviour there warns Men againſt Offences, and particularly charges his Diſciples not to give any. Now this, in the Goſpel-Senſe of the Word, is done, when we miniſter to our Brethren occaſion of Sin, or diſcourage them in the Performance of their Duty. And becauſe the doing either of theſe argues a want of becoming Tenderneſs for the Good of their Souls, and that Want of Tenderneſs proceeds from want of a due Value for their Perſons, as not thinking them worth our Concern: Therefore our Lord does here admoniſh Men againſt that Contempt, and Diſregard for the Safety of their Souls, which either the Meekneſs of our Fellow-Chriſtians, or the Meanneſs of their Circumſtances, might tempt us to treat them with. And this he does by aſſuring us, that, however patient and ſlow of Reſentment the Sufferers may be, and what Security ſoever the Offenders may ſupport themſelves with, from a want of Ability to revenge ſuch Wrongs and Inſolences; yet they had powerful Friends above, and ſuch as would not ſuffer theſe things to be ſo tamely put up, as thoſe Deſpiſers vainly imagined. For that is plainly the Importance of the Laſt Words, *Take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe Little ones; for I ſay unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father, which is in Heaven.*

III. And thus I am led to the *Third* Enquiry: Which, as I ſaid, is the main Point; (and moſt ſuitable to the Deſign of this Feſtival) in the Conſideration whereof it will therefore become us to be ſomewhat large and parti-

particular. For we ſhall not do Juſtice to the Argument, comprehended in this Reaſon alledged by our Saviour, without taking a diſtinct View of theſe Three things.

1. *Firſt*, The Perſons here ſpoken of, The *Angels*.

2. *Secondly*, The Concern they are intimated to have for theſe *Little Ones*, and the Relation they bear to them, They are called *Their* Angels.

3. *Thirdly*, What it is, that renders the Contempt of thoſe *Little Ones* of ſo dangerous Conſequence upon Their Account; implied in thoſe Words, that theſe *Angels* of Theirs do *always behold the Face of* Chriſt's *Father which is in Heaven*.

Firſt, We muſt obſerve the Perſons here ſpoken of, *The Angels*. The Word, in its firſt and proper Signification, denotes no more than *Meſſengers*. But it is now in common Speech attributed, by way of Excellence, to a particular ſort of Being, ſent and employed by Almighty God, upon ſuch weighty Affairs and ſpecial Occaſions, as I ſhall preſently take notice of. In the mean while This (being a Title of Office only) can give us no Light at all into the Nature of Angels; and therefore it will be convenient to obſerve, what Deſcriptions the Holy Scriptures have left us of them. Now there we may be ſatisfied, ſo far as is neceſſary for our purpoſe, both What they are: and How admirably qualified for performing thoſe Services, which Almighty God is pleaſed to make uſe of them for.

Here then we are firſt of all informed, that the Angels are *Spirits*. Freed from that groſs and mortal Nature We have; and conſequently, though they be not preſent in all Places at once; (which none but God can be) yet they are not clogged and limited in their Motions, by the ſame Weight, and the ſame Laws of Matter and Bodily Subſtance, that We are: They fly ſwift as our very Thoughts, and have an Activity far greater than is eaſy Pſal. civ. 4.

for

for us to conceive. For these Reasons it is, that the Cherubim and Seraphim, which are Orders or Kinds of Angels, are described to us with Wings, and, that these Ministers are called *a Flame of Fire*. They are also said to *excel in Strength and Wisdom*, and the different Ranks of them are styled *Thrones, and Dominions, and Principalities, and Powers*. For thus St. *Paul* reckons up the Invisible Parts of the Creation (*Coloss.* i. 16.) And that there are Distinctions and Degrees among them is plain, not from hence only, but from *Michael* being expressly styled an Archangel, and said to have other Angels under his Conduct, whom he led on to fight.

Isai. vi. 2. Ezek. i. 6, 8, 12. —x. 19, 21. Psal. civ. 4. Psal. ciii. 20. 2 Sam. xiv. 20. Jude 9. Rev. xii. 7.

Thus much is common to Angels in general, and of Both sorts. For we are farther taught, that they are of Two sorts; Angels *of Light*, and *a Heavenly Host*; and Angels of *Darkness* and the *Bottomless Pit*: *Holy* Angels, and *Evil* Angels: The Angels *of the Lord*, and the Angels of the *Devil*: Some, *who kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, and are reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment of the great Day*: And *Others*, that *wait continually about the Throne of God, hearkening to the Voice of his Words*, and *ministring unto him*, as he sees fit. And of These, because this Text (as well as this Festival) is chiefly concerned with Them, I shall add these few farther Remarks.

2 Cor. xi. 14. Luke ii. 13. Rev. ix. 11. Matth. xxv. 31. Psal. lxxviii. 50. Matth. xvi. 27. Rev. xii. 7. Matth. xxv. 41. Jude 6. Luke i. 12.

These, we are assured, are vastly numerous. *Thousand thousands*, and *ten thousand times ten thousand*; and the Author to the *Hebrews* calls them an *Innumerable Company*. Wonderfully diligent in the Business committed to their Charge; and therefore

Rev. v. 11. Dan. vii. 10. Heb. xii. 22.

fore called his *Hoſts and Armies*, the Servants that *fulfil his Commandments, and do his Pleaſure*. And, what they are principally employed about, the Apoſtle hath told us, when he *calls them miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation*. That is, God makes theſe the Inſtruments and Miniſters of his good Providence, for the Eternal Advantage of his Choſen and Faithful. Their Office is executed, Sometimes by guiding them in Difficulties, as in the Caſe of *Abraham*'s Steward, and *Jacob*'s Flight: Sometimes, by preventing their Sins and Calamities, as it was with *Hagar* and *Balaam*: Sometimes, by warning them of Dangers, and aſſiſting them in the proper Means of Eſcape, as in the Caſe of *Lot* at the Deſtruction of *Sodom*; and, of *Joſeph*, and the *Wiſe Men from the Eaſt*, when *Herod* ſought *Jeſus* his Life: Sometimes, by aſſuring them of unexpected Deliverances, as in the Caſe of *Gideon*, and *Sampſon*, and St. *Paul* in his Shipwreck: Sometimes, by being the good Man's Protection and Guard from the Enemies, or the Caſualties that threaten him; And thus *David* ſays, *The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them*; and *He ſhall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; They ſhall bear thee up in their Hands, leſt at any time thou daſh thy Foot againſt a Stone*. Sometimes they are made the Executioners of Vengeance upon wicked Men, as in the Deſtruction of *Sodom*; the Peſtilence ſent upon *Iſrael* for *David*'s numbring the People; the *hundred fourſcore and five thouſand Aſſyrians*, cut off in one Night by

Gen. xxxii. 2. Pſal. ciii. 20, 21.

Heb. i. 14.

Gen. xxiv. 7. —xxviii. 12, —15. —xxxii. 1, 24. &c. —xvi. 9. Numb. xxii. 22.

Matth. i. 21. Gen. xix. 12, 15, &c. Matt. ii. 12, 13, 19.

Judges vi. 11, Judges xiii. 3.

Acts xxvii. 23.

Pſal. xxxiv. 7.

Pſal. xci. 11, 12.

Gen. xix. 2 Sam. xxiv. Iſai. xxxvii. 36.

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the Hand of a deſtroying Angel: And in the Caſe of *Herod*, ſmitten by an Angel, for receiving the Blaſphemous Acclamations of his Flatterers. Beſides theſe, and many other Inſtances, we are taught, that the Angels are preſent at our Worſhip; that they conduct the Souls of pious Men when they die, as they did *Lazarus*, into the Seats of Bliſs appointed for them; That, at the laſt great Day, they ſhall ſummon Mankind, and gather them to Judgment; and, after Sentence paſſed, ſhall caſt the Wicked into a Furnace of Fire, their Place of Everlaſting Torture and Puniſhment.

Acts xii. 23.

1 Cor. xi. 10. Eccleſ. v. 6.

Luke xvi. 22.

Matth. xxiv. 31.

Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

So various are the Offices, in which the good Angels are employed, ſo conſtant their Attendance in the Execution of their great Maſter's Orders, that Many have believed their Miniſtry made uſe of, in all the Diſpoſals of Providence, and the continual Government of the World. An Imperfect Notion of this Matter ſeems to have been the Ground of the heathen Idolatry. At leaſt ſo far as it is believed and taught a number of Inferior Deities, aſſiſting and directed by the one ſupreme God, by him appointed to particular ſtations, and endued with a limited Power. Inſomuch, that the Concern in all Human Affairs which the Scriptures attribute to Angels, belonging to a ſort of Excellent and Spiritual Beings, far ſuperior to Us, but ſubordinate to God, ſeems to have been a conſtant and univerſal Tradition both among the Jews and Gentiles. And its being ſo generally received ſeems to be the very Reaſon, why the Old and New Teſtament both, are not more particular and expreſs, in the Explanation of their Condition and Employment. It being ſufficient, only to relate ſome particular Facts of Angels upon ſpecial Occaſions; when the Sacred Writers addreſt

dreſt to Men, who were already ſatisfied, that ſuch Creatures as theſe there certainly were; and who allowed them capable of performing the things there aſcribed to them. Now This all the Jews manifeſtly did, except the *Sadducees* only. They, when they diſclaimed all immaterial Spirits, found themſelves obliged, in Conſequence of their own Principle, to deny that there were Angels. And thus we read they did, *Acts* xxiii. 8. In a Word, The Preſence of God ſeems to have been exhibited by Viſions of Angels; the Guardian of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs is called the *Angel of his Preſence*; the Law delivered in Mount *Sinai* is ſaid by St. *Stephen* to have been received by the *Diſpoſition* of *Angels*. And viſible they thus became, by taking upon them ſome bodily Shape: As we find particularly they did that of a Human Form, when coming to **Abraham*, and †*Lot*, and ‖ *Manoah*, and upon ſundry other Occaſions. To be ſhort. It hath been generally thought, that the Angels have ſo very great a Share in the Adminiſtration of Human Affairs, as to have particular Perſons aſſigned to them for their Change. Which brings me to the *Second* thing.

Iſa. lxiii. 9. Acts vii. 53.

* Gen. xvii. xviii. † Gen. xix. ‖ Judg. xiii.

2. The Concern they are here intimated to have for theſe *Little Ones*, or the Relation they bear to them, in that they are called *Their Angels*. A like Expreſſion we have in the Book of *Acts*; when *Peter* was miraculouſly releaſed out of Priſon, and came to *Mary*'s Houſe, where the Diſciples were met and joining in Prayer. The Servant, who brought in Word, that *Peter* ſpoke to her at the Gate, was anſwer'd, that it could not be He, but *was his Angel*. Now how far ſoever this might be ſtrained beyond the true Importance of the Words; yet thus much, I think, without any wreſting it, muſt be allow'd to infer; that, not only the Jews, but the firſt

Acts xii. 15.

Chriſtians too, were of Opinion, that the Angels took a more than ordinary Care of good Men. I do not at preſent contend for that Doctrine of a Guardian Angel, aſſign'd to each particular perſon, as his proper Protector. Though there be great Authorities of Learned Men in behalf of that alſo; and Many have look'd upon it as ſufficiently aſſerted in theſe Two Paſſages. But, whether that Angel, who unlock'd the Priſon-doors and ſet *Peter* at Liberty; whether That, which was ſuppoſed to be His Angel, had other Saints under his Care beſides *Peter*; Or whether *Peter* might have more Angels than One concerned for his Preſervation: Thus much, methinks, we may fairly infer, That thoſe Chriſtians, who thus expreſs'd themſelves, made no doubt of his having ſome Angel that took Care of him. I am very ſenſible, how eaſy it is to miſtake in ſuch Matters as theſe, relating to the Actions of Creatures above us; and ſuch as we have no means of acquainting ourſelves with, farther than Almighty God, who diſtributes to each of theſe Miniſters his Buſineſs, hath thought fit to let us into the Knowledge of Them and their Doings. I would not therefore advance any thing, in which the Scriptures have been ſilent. They give us no Foundation for that Conceit of *Origen*, That every Man, from his Birth, had a Good and an Evil Angel attending him; The One with all his might labouring his Hurt and Ruin; The Other countermining thoſe Deſigns, and with equal Induſtry promoting his Safety and Happineſs. They do not perhaps give us ſufficient warrant to conclude, that every Man, or even every good Man, hath one Angel diſtinctly to himſelf. But yet thus much the Scripture does in the Point: It makes it very probable, that Nations and Churches have their reſpective Angels, from that Account of *Gabriel*, and the Prince of *Perſia* in *Daniel*: It aſſures us, that the great and proper Buſineſs of the Good Angels is to be aſſiſting to

Chap. x. 13.

Them,

Them, who ſhall be *Heirs of Salvation*: Heb. i. 14.
It deſcribes their kind Regard and Affection, and earneſt Deſire for the good of our Souls; Not only by that univerſal Joy for the Redemption of the World, expreſs'd in Hymns of Praiſe by a Multitude of this *Heavenly Hoſt*, at the Birth of our Adorable Redeemer; but by affirming, that they rejoice at the Repentance of any *One Sinner*. It ſeems in this very Place to declare, that no ſincere good Man whatſoever is deſtitute of the Protection and tender Care of Angels. It aſſerts their conſtant Readineſs, to obſerve what happens to good Men, to do them Right, or to repreſent the Wrongs and Indignities offered to them; and to make uſe of thoſe Opportunities, which their conſtant Fruition of the Divine Preſence gives them, for the Benefit even of the meaneſt and moſt humble Chriſtian. For That is the Senſe and Deſign of our Lord, evidently, and beyond all reaſonable Contradiction; and leads me to the *Third* Particular, Namely,

Luke ii. 13. — xv. 10.

3. What it is, that renders the Contempt of any one of Chriſt's *Little Ones* of ſo dangerous Conſequence; which is, that *their Angels do always in Heaven behold the Face of* Almighty God. The only Difficulty in this Point is, what we are to underſtand by *always beholding God's Face*. The moſt probable, and I think the moſt approved, Interpretation whereof I ſhall lay down as follows.

Nothing is more frequent in the Writings of the New Teſtament, than to ſhadow out to us the Condition of Chriſt's Spiritual Kingdom, and the Privileges of the Saints, by Similitudes taken from the Uſages and Proceedings of Earthly Princes. Thus, becauſe the Right Hand is the Place of Honour among Men, and coming neareſt the Perſon of the Prince, being admitted to his Table, ſitting with him in Judicature, *&c.* argues a Preference above them who are kept at a greater diſtance;

diſtance; The higheſt Advancement in Chriſt's Kingdom is painted out to us by ſuch Figures,

Matth. xx. 21. 23. as *ſitting on his Right-hand and on his Left*; The Authority of the Apoſtles, by *ſitting*

Matth. xix. 28. *on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael:* The Happineſs and high

Luke xvii. 30. Honour of their future State, by *eating and drinking with him at his Table in his Kingdom*. And many other ſuch Reſemblances there are, which muſt not be expounded in their ſtrict and literal Senſe, juſt as the Words ſound; but according to the Proportion they bear to theſe Cuſtoms and Privileges among Men.

In like manner; As in Earthly Courts it is a Mark of Favour, and Intereſt, and Great Power with the King, to be continually in his preſence, in conſtant attendance upon his Royal Perſon, and without any difficulty to approach, and to have the honour of his Ear; So our Lord, by ſaying that theſe *Angels always behold the Face of God*, implies, that they were not only ſuch, as are of the loweſt Degree, and leaſt Intereſt; but Angels of the firſt Quality, and peculiar Favourites, in the Court of Heaven. Again: As Men are well aware, how great a Riſque they run, in injuring or affronting any Perſon, whoſe Intereſt the Prince's Boſom-Friend or principal Officer eſpouſes zealouſly; So they are warned here, to take heed how they offend or deſpiſe any of theſe *Little ones*, who have ſuch potent Patrons with the King of Heaven. And once more: As the Monarchs of this World could give no greater Demonſtration of their Kindneſs, than to commit One whoſe Safety they value, to the Care and Management of a Perſon, who is always ready at hand, always permitted to repreſent the Caſe of this Charge of theirs, and to require ſpeedy Revenge and effectual Redreſs for any Slights or Wrongs offered to him: So we are admoniſhed here to bethink our ſelves, what a Danger

we

we tempt, and to what formidable Miſchiefs we ſtand expoſed; if we ſhall dare to deſpiſe any of Thoſe, who, however little they may be in Our Eſteem, are yet ſo highly prized by the King of Heaven; that He hath appointed them Advocates and Protectors, ſo far from finding any Difficulty of Acceſs to God on their Behalf, that they *always behold his Face*, that is, enjoy all the Advantages of his Divine Preſence and Favour, and ſtand continually before his Throne, in *Heaven*.

The true Meaning then of our Bleſſed Saviour, and that which he deſign'd to teach us in thoſe Words, I conceive, upon the whole Matter, to be this. Not to inform us, that the Holy Angels in Heaven enjoy the Preſence of God perpetually; Nor to aſſure us, that every good Man and ſincere Believer is under the conſtant Care and Inſpection of theſe Spiritual Guardians; (for both theſe things the Perſons, to whom Chriſt ſpoke, moſt firmly believed and took for granted before) But he intended to ſhew, that the very meaneſt, meekeſt, and moſt deſpicable of thoſe *Little Ones*, who believe in Him, are thought not unworthy the very ſolicitous Concern, and never-failing Patronage, of the Higheſt and Greateſt of the Angels: Such as, in their Power and Capacity above, anſwer to the Nobility, and Prime Miniſters of State, in the Courts of Earthly Princes. And becauſe the Conſequences of ſlighting and injuring thoſe, who are ſecure of ſuch zealous and ſuch powerful Friends, muſt in all reaſon be ſuppoſed very terrible; *Therefore take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe Little Ones*, ſays Chriſt; Whom the Great God, and his Servants the Bleſſed Spirits above, are ſo far from deſpiſing, that *I ſay unto you, in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Heaven.*

Thus much may ſuffice for the Explanation and Doctrinal part of that Paſſage. It ſhall now be my Endeavour to draw from thence ſome few practical Infe-

rences, ſuitable to the Senſe and Intention of our Bleſſed Lord; and ſuch, as every conſidering Man's own Mind would naturally ſuggeſt to his Thoughts, upon this Occaſion.

1. And *Firſt*, Can we reflect upon this wonderful Œconomy of the Angels being miniſtring Spirits for the Benefit of Good Men, and not feel our Souls very powerfully excited to Thankfulneſs and Praiſe, for ſuch Love and Care of us? For, What is Man, that God ſhould thus remember him; or the Son of Man, that he ſhould give his Angels ſuch ſtrict Charge over him? That not only Creatures of an Inferior Quality ſhould be made for his Uſe and Service, but that Spirits, ſo much higher and more excellent than We, ſhould in ſome ſort become our Servants too? That theſe bright Guards, who never ſlumber nor ſleep, ſhould pitch their Tents round about us, and watch perpetually for the Preſervation of ſuch frail helpleſs Wretches? That our Souls ſhould be eſteem'd at ſo high a rate, as to engage the Hoſt of Heaven in their Cauſe, to add to their Joy, and make Their Heaven yet more Heaven, upon every Conqueſt we gain over Sin and Satan? This Honour did we but duly conſider, the moſt ſtupid of us all would find a ſenſible Change in his Affections; and could not but admire and adore the Wiſdom of Providence, which hath thus diſpoſed all things for the Advantage of ſuch vile, ſuch polluted, ſuch unworthy Creatures. Ingratitude for ſuch diſtinguiſhing Marks of Favour cannot poſſibly be the Effect of any thing elſe, but perfect Thoughtleſneſs, and extreme Inſenſibility. For they, who think at all, muſt be amazed at the Proceeding; and, full of holy Surprize, will at every turn feel *David*'s Exclamation uppermoſt in their Minds and Mouths, *Lord, what is Man, that thou beareſt ſuch reſpect unto him, or the Son of Man, that thou makeſt ſuch* mighty *account of him?*

Pſal. cxliv. 3.

2.

2. But *Secondly*, Let us be well aſſured that we are not thankful for this marvellous Loving-Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion truly, and as we ought to be, unleſs this appear by our Imitation of it, as we have Power and Opportunity. *Beloved*, if God and the Holy Angels are ſo very ſolicitous for *Our* Souls; We ought alſo to be concerned very tenderly for *one another's* Souls. Much more indeed ought We, upon that very account, becauſe They are. Our Safety is owing to their Care of us; And what can be greater Baſeneſs, than not to impart to our Brethren the little Aſſiſtance we are able, when we reap ſuch mighty Benefit from the Succour of Others? What fouler Ingratitude, than not to unite in the ſame glorious Deſign of ſaving Souls, which all Heaven is unanimous in, and every good Spirit ſo aſſiduouſly promotes? But they are removed far above Us; And though Man be next in Order of the Creatures, ſtill betwixt us and Angels we may eaſily perceive the Diſtance to be very great. But yet this Diſtance hinders not Their Concern for Us, from being expreſs'd in the moſt diligent, the moſt profitable, the moſt neceſſary manner, that the Deareſt and moſt Officious Affection can ſuggeſt. The moſt exalted and brighteſt of all thoſe Sons of God diſdains not the doing good Offices for the meaneſt Chriſtian; nor ever thinks his Intereſt in the Court of Heaven better employed, than when it is uſed in the Service of any of thoſe *Little Ones*, whom Men are ſo apt to deſpiſe. And ſhall Men ſtill deſpiſe them? Shall our Superiors not think it beneath Their Dignity, to do them good; and ſhall We be cold and indifferent what becomes of them? Shall They, who are of a more excellent Nature, ſtoop ſo low, as to watch and guard them; and ſhall We, of the ſame Paſſions and Infirmities, caſt a haughty negligent look, ſtop our Ears to their Cries and Complaints, value our ſelves upon the Vanity of a little outward Pomp and Wealth, and account it a-

Diſparagement to lend our helping hand? The Angels are paſt all Danger of falling; but We are in daily Hazard. And if They compaſſionate the Miſeries and Fears they cannot feel; how hard-hearted, how inſenſible are We, if the Wants and the Dangers, which every Day makes our own, do not move our Pity, and inſpire a very quick and tender Senſe for the pooreſt and moſt deſtitute Fellow-Chriſtians? In ſhort, Angels we muſt be, or Brutes, or Devils, to one another. Angels we are; if We, like Them, are affectionately concerned for, and induſtrious to advance, the Happineſs and Salvation of their Souls: Brutes, if we feel no Impreſſion, have no regard to their Sufferings and Fears, their Dangers and Diſtreſſes: But Devils, if we be ſo far from endeavouring to reſcue, as to engage them deeper, and intangle them yet more, in the Snare of the Tempter, by enticing them to ſin; Or if our Hearts have ſo much of Hell in them, as even to be pleaſed with their Wickedneſs, or to triumph in their Miſeries. Such Wretches would do well even to *deſpiſe theſe Little Ones*; that is, to let them alone, and utterly diſregard them; in compariſon of what they now do. For to lead Men into Sin, and to rejoice in their Ruin, is directly to counter-work the Bleſſed Angels, and to become Miniſters to thoſe that ſhall inherit Darkneſs and Damnation.

3. *Thirdly*, The Conſideration of what hath been ſaid concerning the Holy Angels, and their Concern for us, may be of admirable Uſe to encourage and fortify us in our Conflicts with Temptations. We readily enough acknowledge the Power, and Subtlety, and fatal Diligence, of the Devil upon theſe Occaſions. But who is the Devil; An Angel, once of Light, but now of Darkneſs: And all the ſhining Excellencies he formerly had, are turned into Malice, and Apoſtacy, and Miſchief. But then let us remember, that, as our Adverſary is an Angel; ſo are our Guards Angels alſo:

Of

Of the ſame natural Wiſdom, and Activity, and Strength; As zealous to ſave, as He can be eager to deſtroy; As watchful and diligent in their Poſt to defend and repulſe, as He to attack, and get ground upon us. If he ſuggeſt evil Thoughts, They have the ſame Power to inſtil good ones. And there is no reaſon, why we ſhould not believe the one of theſe to be done, as well as the Other. None, why They, who are by Nature equal, ſhould not have, None to ſuſpect they do not uſe, all the ways of counter-working his Deſigns, and all the ſame Methods of inſinuating themſelves for promoting Piety, which he can poſſibly have for the hardening us in Vice. 'Tis true indeed, there is Treachery within; The Corruption of our Hearts, and the Infirmities of human Nature, render the Place hardly tenable; and defended it could not be by our Own Strength. But, do we conſider, what unſeen Guards we have, what Forces in reſerve? A numerous and powerful Recruit, like the Horſes and Chariots of Fire round about *Eliſha*, are encamped on every ſide us. The Armies of the moſt high God, valiant and wiſe, faithful to their Charge, and zealous in our Defence. And if we do not forſake theſe Succours by ſurrendring, but reſolve to hold out the Siege; though we be compaſſed round with Enemies, yet we may encourage ourſelves, as that Prophet did his timorous Servant, who was ſafe but knew it not, *Fear not, for they that be with us* are more and mightier, than *They that be againſt us*. 2 Kings vi. 16, 17.

4. *Fourthly*, The Conſtant Preſence of theſe Angels with us, and the Knowledge they have of our Actions and Affairs, ſhould make us very careful of our Behaviour. Thoſe, who thought each Man to have a good and an evil Angel always attending him, were of Opinion, that, when any Man grew froward and perverſe, and gave himſelf up to Wickedneſs, the Good Spirit took its Flight, and the Evil one took entire Poſſeſſion

of him. But, however that be, 'tis certain, theſe Angels that guard us, are Spirits of Holineſs and Purity; that they have an irreconcileable Averſion to Filthineſs and Vice; and therefore we ought by no means to provoke or grieve them, by indulging ſuch Luſts and Practices, as they cannot but hate. Many Reſtraints we put upon our ſelves, when under the Obſervation of Good or Great Men. And ſhall we not pay the ſame or greater Deference to Witneſſes ſo much higher in Quality, ſo much more perfect in Goodneſs, than the Beſt or Greateſt of the Sons of Men? *Solomon* makes it an Argument againſt raſh and haſty Vows, that the Angel is an Evidence of our Error. And St. *Paul* orders the Women to come decently habited to Church, becauſe *of the Angels*. Now the ſame Reaſon will hold in Other Inſtances of human Life. But eſpecially, we ſhall do well to make it a Check upon us, that we carry ourſelves with all Comelineſs, and Gravity, and Reverence, in our publick and private Devotions. That no Lightneſs, or Negligence, betray a Diſreſpect of thoſe who ſtand by us, and overlook us in theſe Actions; and that They, who *always behold our Father's Face in Heaven*, may have no Cauſe to think themſelves affronted, or to complain of our Rudeneſs and ill Uſage to them, in that Court above.

Eccleſ. v. 6.

1 Cor. xi. 10.

But *Fifthly*, This Reſpect muſt be ſo tempered too, as not to run out into Exceſs or Superſtition. Their Knowledge of and Care for us challenge our Reverence; but neither this, nor any thing elſe, can demand our Adoration, or render it allowable to worſhip and pray to them. When St. *John*, in a Tranſport of indiſcreet Zeal, had proſtrated his Body before the Feet of an Angel; he was reproved, and informed of the Unlawfulneſs of the thing, in theſe very remarkable Words: *See thou do it not, I am thy Fellow-ſervant, and of thy Brethren, that have*

Rev. xix. 10. Laxii. 9.

have the Teſtimony of Jeſus; *Worſhip God.* They are of a Nature more excellent than Ours, but ſtill they are *Brethren*; and we muſt not pay that Duty to Any of the Children, which belongs to Their and Our common Father only. They are our Fellow Servants, though Servants in a higher Poſt: But, let their Station be never ſo high, ſtill we muſt preſerve the Diſtinctions, which are due and peculiar to the Maſter of the Family. To pay them no regard is Ingratitude and Ill-Manners; but to pay them Bodily Adoration, and offer up our Prayers to them, is Injuſtice and Sacrilege, Superſtition and Idolatry. And therefore *ſee thou do it not, Worſhip God.* For God alone is, God alone can be, the lawful, the proper Object of Worſhip.

Laſtly, From the ſeveral Caſes of the Angels being ſaid to aſſiſt and defend Holy Men in Scripture, we have reaſon to believe, that the Benefit of their Protection extends, not only to Spiritual, but alſo to Temporal, Dangers and Adverſities: That they ſhield us from many Misfortunes, prevent many ſad Caſualties, and put by many a ſore Thruſt, which our Enemies endeavour to make us fall by. To what elſe indeed, but to ſuch an unſeen Defence, can we attribute the wonderful Preſervations of little Children, the infinite Eſcapes from ſad and ſurprizing Accidents, the ſurprizing Deliverances in Caſes of Extremity, where human Helps were vain, and we had given all for loſt? Our Souls, 'tis true, are Their Chief care; and ſo they ought to be our Own too. But ſuch Afflictions, as 'tis profitable for us to be guarded from, are driven away by theſe Inſtruments of a good Providence towards us. Such again, as it is better for us to be exerciſed with, they give way to; and ſuſpend the Protection of our Bodies, that our *Souls may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus.* Let us then thank God for theſe bright Guardians; Let us imitate their Diligence and Condeſcenſion in doing Good; Let us hearten ourſelves with

their Assistance against Temptations; Let us behave ourselves, as becomes Men under their Observation; And not only pray, but endeavour daily, that the *Will of our Father may be done by Us upon Earth*, with the same Chearfulness and Vigilance, as *it is* by Them *in Heaven*, And let us beg of God, that, *as they always do him Service in Heaven, so they may succour and defend us on Earth*; and at last, when we shall leave this Earth, that they may conduct us to the Regions of immortal Happiness, to the *innumerable Company of Angels*, where we shall be ever with them, and like them. All which we may hope to obtain, through the sole Merits and Mediation, of Their and Our Lord and King, even Jesus Christ the Righteous;

Collect.

Heb. xii. 22.

Who submitted, for our sakes, to be *made lower than the Angels*; but is now set down at the Right Hand of God, *Angels, and Authorities, and Powers, being made subject unto him*. To Him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be ascribed, as is most due, All Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, henceforth and for evermore, *Amen*.

Heb. ii. 7, 9.

1 Pet. iii. 22.

St. Luke's Day.

A short Account of St. Luke.

THE Place of his Birth was *Antioch*, the Metropolis of *Syria*. A Place famous for good Education, and the Study of the Liberal Arts. After some Im-

Improvement in these, which St. *Luke* is supposed to have laid as a Foundation, he betook himself to Physick. He is thought to have been converted by St. *Paul* at *Antioch*. A Companion of whose Travels and Sufferings he plainly appears to have been, from the time of his first going into *Macedonia*, Of This his Change of Style, including himself as a Party concerned in the Narrative, from *Acts* xvi. 10. and so forwards, is Evidence clear enough. Some Passages in the Epistles shew him to have been very useful and dear to that Apostle; and to have continued his Attendance upon him, not only till his first, but second coming to *Rome*, and the near approach of his Martyrdom.

Coloss. iv. 14.

Chrys. T. VII. Orat. 95.

2 Cor. viii. 18. 19.

2 Tim. iv. 11.

How he disposed of himself afterwards, is not so certain. It is said by Some, that he preached in *Dalmatia*, *Gallia*, (or *Galatia*) *Italy*, and *Macedonia*. By Others, that he travelled into the East, *Ægypt*, and *Libya*. As uncertain is the Time, and Place, and Manner, of his Death. Though it be generally believed, that he suffered Martyrdom about the eighty-fourth Year of his Age; and some affirm him to have been hanged on an Olive Tree.

Hieronym. *Catal. Script.*

That he was one of the Seventy Disciples, is a Notion, inconsistent with his own Declaration at the beginning of his Gospel. For he tells us the Facts there recorded, not as of his own Knowledge, but as communicated to him by those who were Eye-Witnesses: Which also overthrows Their Opinion, who suppose it dictated to him by St. *Paul*. The time of writing this is reasonably concluded to have been before the sending of St. *Paul*'s second Epistle to the *Corinthians*. For upon this account it is, that he hath generally been thought to be there styled, *The Brother, whose Praise is in the Gospel*. Which

2 Cor. viii. 18.

Treatise

Treatiſe, if it were meant by St. *Paul*, when he ſays, 2 Tim. ii. 8. *Jeſus Chriſt was raiſed from the dead according to my Goſpel*: The Senſe of thoſe words, I take it, muſt be, That St. *Luke*'s Goſpel was ſeen, and approved by him, as in all Points agreeable to the Doctrine, which He preached, and had learn'd by Revelation. And thus we may underſtand *Euſebius*, *Hiſt.* Lib. III. *C.* 8. when he ſays, St. *Luke* committed to writing the Goſpel preached by St. *Paul*. The Occaſion of this Undertaking himſelf intimates to have been the raſh and wrong Accounts, given to the World, by Some who had, either ignorantly, or preſumptuouſly, miſrepreſented the Actions and Doctrines of Chriſt, and ſowed the Seeds of Error in the Church. He is more circumſtantial in relating the Facts, and more exact in the Method and Order of them, than Either of the Two Evangeliſts, who wrote before him: In all Probability, for the Reaſon laſt mentioned *.

The Book of *Acts* is alſo of His Compoſing †; Written at *Rome*, and deſigned for a continuation of his former Hiſtory.

* *This Opinion ſeems to have been favoured by St.* Ambroſe, *and* Eraſmus; *and* Beza *eſpouſes it ſo far, as to ſay, that any difference of this kind will be beſt adjuſted, by accommodating the other Evangeliſts to St.* Luke, *not St.* Luke *to Them. But many are of a contrary Opinion, and think this preference hath proceeded from overſtraining the Senſe of the* Greek *Words at Ch.* i. *Ver.* 3. *which we tranſlate* to write unto thee in order. *Now in this ſo ſtrict Senſe none of the Evangeliſts ſeem very ſolicitous to have* written in order. *Concerning which the Reader, who hath capacity and leiſure, may entertain himſelf very profitably, with the peruſal of Chap.* v. *of* Chemnitius *his* Prolegomen. *to his* Harmony.

Thus much however muſt be allowed, That to St. Luke *we owe, not only the relation of ſeveral Facts and Diſcourſes, wholly omitted by the Two who wrote before him; but alſo the knowledge of the Reaſons and Occaſions for many things being done or ſpoken, which give great light and beauty to thoſe accounts in St.* Matth. *and St.* Mark, *where no ſuch Connection hath been obſerved. Examples of the former ſort we have in Chap.* i, ii, iv. *from Ver.* 14. *to* 30. vii. *from Ver.* 36. *to the End.* ix. *from Ver.* 51. *to* 57. x. *from* 29. *to the End.* xii. *from Ver.* 13. *to* 21. xiii. *from Ver.* 1. *to* 18. *the greateſt part of the* xiv. xv. *and* xvi. *Chapters: with many others in the following parts of this Goſpel.*

Of the Latter ſort are, Luke v. *to Ver.* 12. *compared with* Matth. iv. 18—20. *and* Mark i. 16—18. Luke vii. 11—22. *with* Matth. xi. 2—4. Luke xi. 37, *&c. compared with* Matth. xxiii. 23, *&c.* Luke xv. 4—8. *compared with* Matth xviii. 12—14. *and other Inſtances, which a diligent Reader will find pleaſure in diſcovering.*

† Hieron. *Catal. Script.*

To

To This we owe the Account of the firſt miraculous Effuſions of the Holy Spirit, and the mighty Effects conſequent thereupon. Which Book, containing the Accompliſhments of our Lord's parting Promiſes, the laying the Foundations of his Church, and the Evidences of his Glory and Exaltation, the Church heretofore thought it proper, to read in her publick Aſſemblies, between the Feaſts of *Eaſter*, and *Pentecoſt*, or *Whitſuntide*.

TheſeBooks are both addreſs'd to *Theophilus*. Who, by the Style of Moſt Excellent, is ſuppoſed to have been a Perſon of Eminence and Authority, and poſſibly one of *Antioch*, converted by St. *Luke*. Theophylact.

The Collect.

ALmighty God, who calledſt *Luke* the Phyſician, whoſe Praiſe is in the Goſpel, to be an Evangeliſt, and Phyſician of the Soul; May it pleaſe thee, that by the wholſome Medicines of the Doctrine delivered by him, all the Diſeaſes of our Souls may be healed, through the Merits of thy Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, *Amen*. Col. iv. 14. 2 Cor. viii. 18.

The Epiſtle.

2 Tim. iv. 5.

5. *WAtch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangeliſt, make full proof of thy miniſtry.*

6. *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7. *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith:*

8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.*

9. *Do thy diligence to come ſhortly unto me.*

10. *For Demas hath forſaken me, having loved this preſent world, and is departed into Theſſalonica: Creſcent to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

Paraphraſe.

5, 6. Be vigilant and patient, diligent in every part of thy Office; Not diſcouraged, but rather quickned, by my Danger and Death.

7, 8. The approach whereof I can ſee with Joy, ſupported by the Teſtimony of my Conſcience, the Remembrance of my paſt Sincerity and Sufferings, and the Proſpect of a glorious Reward, reſerved for me, to the Day of Chriſt's Coming to Judgment.

10. *Demas*, willing to ſecure his Perſon, hath left me in this time of Danger.

11. *Luke*

11. Luke ſticks cloſe to me, and is not diſmayed at my Sufferings.

11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the miniſtry.*

12. *And Tychicus have I ſent to Epheſus.*

13. *The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comeſt, bring with thee, and the books, but eſpecially the parchments.*

14. *Alexander the copperſmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works.*

15. *Of whom be thou ware alſo; for he hath greatly withſtood our words.*

COMMENT.

THIS Portion of Scripture ſeems to have been now choſen, on account of the Commendation of St. *Luke*'s Conſtancy, *Ver.* 11. by which he diſtinguiſhed himſelf at a very trying Time. Of That notice hath been taken already: And, no other Subject offering it ſelf, which hath not already been ſpoken to, I paſs forward to the Goſpel.

The GOSPEL.

PARAPHRASE. *St.* Luke x. 1.

1. Seventy.] Of a ſecond Order, and Inferior to the Twelve Apoſtles.

1. *THE Lord appointed other ſeventy alſo, and ſent them two and two before his face, into every city and place, whither he himſelf would come.*

2. *Therefore ſaid he unto them, The harveſt truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harveſt, that he would ſend forth labourers into his harveſt.*

3. The Meſſage I ſend you upon is full of Danger, but I who ſend you, will protect you in it.

3. *Go your ways: behold, I ſend you forth as lambs among wolves.*

4. Depend upon me for Proviſion, and make no Preparation, nor loſe time in unneceſſary Delays. *Saluting no man, &c.* is a Phraſe, intimating all poſſible Diſpatch to be made, (See 2 *Kings* iv. 29.)

4. *Carry neither purſe, nor ſcrip, nor ſhoes: and ſalute no man by the way.*

5, 6. Implore a Bleſſing on the Houſes you come to; which ye ſhall do with good Effect, if the Family be well diſpoſed; but if otherwiſe, they ſhall have no Benefit by your Prayers.

5. *And into whatſoever houſe ye enter, firſt ſay, Peace be to this houſe.*

6. *And if the Son of Peace be there, your peace ſhall reſt upon it: if not, it ſhall turn to you again.*

7. Let not Niceneſs or Curioſity carry you to change; but remain content

7. *And in the ſame houſe remain, eating and drinking ſuch things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.*

tented with the Entertainment you find. For which They, who ſo receive you, will not think you indebted; for your Miniſtry deſerves this return at their hands.

COMMENT.

IN diſcourſing upon this Paſſage, I ſhall confine my Thoughts principally to thoſe words at the *Second Verſe*; which our Bleſſed Saviour ſaw ſo important, as, after having ſpoken them at the firſt Miſſion of the Twelve Apoſtles, to repeat them here again at the ſending out the Seventy Diſciples. Upon this Occaſion I will, *Firſt*, Explain the Terms, in which our Lord delivered himſelf: And then, *Secondly*, I ſhall raiſe ſuch Obſervations and Inferences from thence, as may be uſeful and improving to us.

1. In order to a right Underſtanding of the words, it will be neceſſary to enquire into theſe *four* things.

Firſt, What is meant by the *Harveſt* in the Text.

Secondly, Who are the *Labourers* here.

Thirdly, Who is the *Lord* of that Harveſt; and,

Laſtly, After what manner he *ſends forth his Labourers into it*.

1. As to the *Firſt* of Theſe, what is meant by the Harveſt: We read indeed of a Harveſt in the Parable of the Tares, which anſwers to the End of the World, and the Reapers to the Angels, who ſhall then gather all Mankind together to Judgment. But This here is of a quite different Nature; and no great Queſtion can be made, but the bringing in the yet unbelieving part of the World, and particularly the Jews, to the Acknowledging of the Truth, and to the Church of Chriſt, is intended by it. Now the Propriety of this Metaphorical Expreſſion may very eaſily appear to us, if we conſider the mutual Reſemblances, which theſe two things bear to each other. Matth. xiii. 39.

The *Harveſt*, we know, is the Seaſon of gathering in ripe Fruits; and ſuppoſes not only the Labour of Tillage and Seed-time, but all thoſe other Advantages

of

of Good Soil, and kindly Weather, to have gone before, which are neceſſary for bringing the Crop to its juſt Perfection. Thus the Propagation of the Goſpel is very fitly termed the *Harveſt*; with regard to the Law and the Prophets, and all thoſe other Diſpenſations, which went before, and were purpoſely deſigned to lead Men to, and by degrees to prepare them for, this laſt and compleat Revelation of the Divine Will. The Light of Nature, to the Gentiles and all Mankind in general, ſcattered the firſt Seeds of this Spiritual Fruit; The Types and Sacrifices of the *Moſaick* Inſtitution were farther Improvements of the ſame Huſbandry: The Predictions of the *Meſſiah* and his Kingdom helped yet more to bring it forward: And the profiting under ſuch Ordinances was the Growth of the Corn. But yet none of theſe could be called the *Harveſt*, becauſe Men had not under Them arrived to their due Maturity. That was reſerved for the Goſpel-State of Perfection, which all the reſt were induſtriouſly contrived to promote and be ſubſervient to.

When therefore the Fulneſs of Time was come; They who gained Men over to this State, fulfilled the End of all the preceding Diſpenſations. They gathered in the Product, which thoſe Diſpenſations had made ready for them. Upon which account it is, that our Bleſſed Lord himſelf ſpeaks of the Diſpoſition the World was then in, to receive the Doctrine of his Diſciples, under the Figure of *the Fields being white to Harveſt*. He calls thoſe who ſhould preach that Doctrine, *Gatherers of Fruit unto Life Eternal*. He applies to Them, as ſucceeding the Prieſts and Prophets heretofore, that Proverb, *One ſoweth and another reapeth*; and ſays upon the ſame Occaſion, *I ſent you to reap that whereon ye beſtowed no Labour, Other Men laboured, and ye are entred into their Labours.*

John iv. 35.

Ver. 36.

Ver. 38.

Theſe

These Passages, as they give some Light, and help us considerably, to a right Apprehension of This before us; So do they likewise furnish us with a very good Reason, why our Blessed Master should represent the Propagation of the Christian Faith under the Notion of a *Harvest*. And that is, The mighty Encouragement hereby administred to all, who were about to embark in so profitable a Design. What St. *Paul* hints to the *Corinthians*, our particular Sense and Experience confirms abundantly to every one of us; that *He that ploweth ploweth in Hope; and he that thresheth in Hope, does it to be Partaker of his Hope.* For, as no Advantage can be attained without Labour; so no Labour would be borne, if the Prospect of Advantage arising from thence did not sustain and quicken Men under it. Now though none be more toilsome, yet none, 'tis plain, is more chearfully undergone, than that of Harvest. The Reason whereof is manifestly this: That it brings its own Reward along with it, and puts that very Increase into present possession, which Men had long and earnestly expected, and were content to sweat, and drudge, and be at Expence for, in the earliest and most distant Seasons, indeed in all the parts, of the whole Year throughout. 1 Cor. ix. 10.

Now this was the Case of the Apostles, and Others who undertook to establish Christianity in the World. The Attempt it is true was laborious and difficult. But then their Condition was very different from that of Prophets and Priests in former Ages. These planted and sowed, but brought not any Fruit to Perfection. And This was but an uncomfortable sort of Employment, in comparison of Theirs, who came into the reaping part; who found all things ready to their hands, and whose Business was to give the finishing Stroke only. For it was Their Privilege and particular Satisfaction, to see and enjoy the Success of their own Endeavours; by

bringing in Multitudes of Souls, like Wheat into the Garner of their Lord, and carrying up Religion to as high a Pitch of Excellence, as ever it was designed to reach in the present World.

Thus the Gospel, and the Preaching of it, being the saving of those Souls, which the less perfect Revelations of God's Will had ripened and made fit for this better Covenant; the present Advantage of the Persons concerned, who reaped the Benefit of those Pains, which had long been preparing the World for that Perfection of Righteousness, which They never lived to see the Accomplishment of, is very reasonably styled a *Harvest*, For it is the just Ripeness of the Law of Nature, and of *Moses*; and it encouraged the Labourers employed to gather it in, by the present and mighty Compensation of all their Sweat and Toil upon this Occasion.

By thus long insisting upon the *first* Enquiry, we shall find our Trouble much shortned in them that follow. For nothing can be plainer, from the Analogy of this whole Similitude, than that by

2. The Labourers, *Secondly*, Are meant the Ministers of the Gospel. The Souls of Men are the *Fruits*; The bringing these over to Truth and Salvation is the *gathering* of the Fruits: And consequently the Persons employed and particularly intrusted in this Office, are the *Labourers* mentioned in the Text. By the Harvest *being great* then are meant the infinite Numbers of Persons, which should be converted to the Christian Faith; By the *Labourers being few*, the very small Number of Preachers, at that time exceeding disproportionate to the Occasion there was for them; And, by *praying the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth Labourers*, they were commanded to beg of God, so to qualify and appoint Men for the undertaking this great Work; that so promising and plentiful a Crop might not be lost, for want of hands to get it in; that

They,

They, who wanted no Inclination, might not be deſtitute of ſufficient Means, fit and able Inſtructors: whereby they might be *ſaved*, and *come to the Knowledge of the Truth.*

3. As little Difficulty will there be, *Thirdly*, in diſcerning, who this *Lord of the Harveſt is.* For that can be no other, than Almighty God; who hath declared, that *All Souls are His:* More particularly, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. For He, beſides his Original Right of Creation, hath acquired another Title to them; Even That of Purchaſe; Theſe being redeemed at the Price of his own Blood. But, is it not amazing, that He, who, with regard to his Divine Nature, was the Proprietor and Lord of the Harveſt, ſhould not diſdain to take upon him Human Nature, and in it to perform the Office of a *Labourer* himſelf? And yet thus he *went about doing Good*, teaching the Ignorant, working Miracles in Confirmation of the Truth, perſuading, convincing, exhorting, and, by all the Arts of Holy Eloquence, turning thoſe into good Corn, who before were Weeds and Tares in this Common Field. To His Pains, and Merits, and Love, the very beſt of Men owe their Happineſs of being brought into the Threſhing-floor of the Church, cleanſed, and receiving into the Granary of this Spiritual Huſband-man. For in themſelves they are no better than Chaff and Refuſe, and had deſerved to be caſt out, and burnt with unquenchable Fire. Such was his Condeſcenſion. And for his Authority; That he aſſerted, as by ſeveral other Inſtances, ſo particularly, by diſpatching the Twelve Apoſtles in the Tenth of St. *Matthew*, and the Seventy Diſciples here, upon this Errand of converting Men to the Truth. For none but the *Lord of the Harveſt* could of right ſend forth *Labourers*; and He therefore ſent them, becauſe the Harveſt was *His*: Which leads us to conſider,

Ezek. xviii. 4.

Acts x. 38.

4. *Fourthly*, That, as the Labourers, whom this Lord ſends forth into his Harveſt, muſt of Neceſſity denote the Perſons entruſted by Him in the Buſineſs of Man's Salvation; ſo the ſending them forth as manifeſtly imports his Command and Commiſſion, by Virtue whereof they engage in this great Work. Thus the Twelve Apoſtles firſt, and afterwards the Seventy, were commiſſioned by that poſitive and expreſs Authority, which Chriſt gave them from his own Mouth. And the Power of caſting out Devils, healing Diſeaſes, and doing many other wonderful Works, was not only an effectual Qualification for perſuading thoſe to whom they addreſſed their Diſcourſes; but it was likewiſe an Evident Proof of their being ſent from God, and delivering ſuch things, as were true, and exactly agreeable to His good Pleaſure. Reaſon and common Senſe teach Men naturally to argue thus; That God alone can overrule the ſettled Courſe of Cauſes and Effects; That, whoever exceeds the fixed Rules and Powers of Nature, could not do this but by the Concurrence of His Almighty Power: And, that it can by no means conſiſt with the infinite Juſtice and Goodneſs of God, to lead honeſt well-meaning Men into ſuch dangerous Deceits, as muſt be the Conſequence of believing thoſe Doctrines, which they ſubmit to in an humble Confidence, that the God of Truth will not ſet His Seal of Miracles to a Lye.

But in regard the calling this Goſpel-Diſpenſation God's *Harveſt* implies it to be the Laſt and moſt perfect Diſpenſation, and conſequently to continue till the end of the World: In regard Chriſt himſelf hath long ago returned into Heaven, there to abide till the final Conſummation of all things: It is manifeſt, that the Miniſters and Labourers meant here, cannot, in ſucceeding Ages, be ſuppoſed to receive their Authority from this Lord of the Harveſt, in the ſame immediate manner, as They did, who converſed with him in Fleſh,

and

and were inſtructed at his own Mouth. Again, ſince the whole Harveſt is His, and none are Lawful Labourers, but thoſe whom He appoints: It muſt needs be of great Importance, to know, how we may diſtinguiſh between the lawful and the uſurping Labourers: Who are entruſted by Chriſt in the gathering this Fruit unto Life Eternal; and who They are, who buſily thruſt their Sickle into another Man's Corn, and work upon their own Heads.

Now, when the Author to the *Hebrews* ſays (*Ch.* v. 4.) *No Man taketh this Honour to himſelf, but He that is called of God as was Aaron*; his Meaning is, Not only that *Jeſus*, as the Goſpel-High-Prieſt, derived his Commiſſion from God, as well as the Prieſts under the Law; but alſo, that none may preſume, under this State of things, to execute the Prieſt's Office without ſuch a Commiſſion. For the regular iſſuing whereof our Lord himſelf made Proviſion; when, after his Reſurrection, imparting to the Apoſtles the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, he ſays, *As my Father hath ſent Me, even ſo ſend I you.* His Father ſent Him with Power to impart Authority for preaching the Goſpel to his Apoſtles; who after his Aſcent into Heaven were to be the viſible Directors of the Church in his ſtead. But thoſe Apoſtles were mortal; And therefore he ſent Them with the ſame Power of imparting Their Authority to Others, who, after Their Deceaſe, ſhould govern and direct the Church in Their ſtead. Thus the Power is perpetual, and always the ſame; though the Perſons exerciſing and inveſted with it, are frequently changed. Accordingly we find that Power uſed, and Directions for the Uſe of it, and what ſort of Perſons ought from time to time to be entruſted with it, in the Epiſtles of the New Teſtament. And therefore all They, whom the Succeſſors of thoſe Apoſtles, the Biſhops and Paſtors of the Chriſtian Church, do examine, and approve, and appoint to the Miniſtry

[a] John xx. 21.

of the Word and Sacraments; All Theſe, I ſay, are *Labourers* ſent by the *Lord of the Harveſt*. And Theſe he ſends, when, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, (*Epheſ.* iv.) *He gives ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt.* Theſe ſeveral Orders and Degrees of Men, their Succeſſion, and their Commiſſion, are no leſs from Him, than That of his own *Twelve*, and *Seventy*, ſent by himſelf. The Diſtance of the Remove makes no Difference in the Nature and Validity of their Call; But all They are ſent by Him, who are ſent by Thoſe, whom He ſent with expreſs Power to ſend Others. And, as Such, and ſuch only, are true Miniſters of the Chriſtian Church at large; ſo Thoſe, whom the Laws of each particular Church and State, (agreeably to the Laws of the Chriſtian Church at large) have determined to ſome particular Places for the Exerciſe of their Charge, are to be looked upon, as the Labourers entruſted with that part of this common Field. And all within their ſeveral Juriſdictions, their ſeveral Provinces, Dioceſes, Pariſhes, Congregations, are bound, as they will anſwer it to that Lord of the Harveſt whoſe Labourers theſe are, to hear, and reverence, and ſubmit to Them, as the Perſons ſet *to watch over their Souls*.

Thus much, I think, may very well ſuffice for my *Firſt* Head; which undertook to explain the Text, and give the true Importance of thoſe Figurative Terms, in which it is expreſs'd. I now proceed to my *Second*; Which, I ſaid, ſhould conſiſt of ſome ſuch Obſervations and Inferences ariſing from thence, as may contribute to our improving by it.

1. And *Firſt*, This Spiritual *Harveſt*, and the Greatneſs of it, gives us a fair Occaſion to contemplate and admire the Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of Almighty God, in the aſtoniſhing Succeſs of his Goſpel.

This

This is undoubtedly the *Lord's doing*, and ſuch, as can never be ſufficiently *marvellous in our Eyes*. And therefore We, who are, as the Apoſtle calls his *Corinthians*, *God's Husbandry*, ought to reflect upon the mighty Operations of his Grace in our ſelves and others, with holy Wonder and humble Thankfulneſs. We ſhould conſtantly ſtir up our Zeal and Diligence, to anſwer the good Intents of ſo amazing a Providence; and take all poſſible Care to bring forth Fruits worthy of ſuch Mercy. For dreadful will be Our Caſe at laſt, beyond what we are able to fear or to conceive; if we ſhall fall under that Aggravation of our other Sins, to have received this *Grace of God in vain*.

1 Cor. iii. 9.

2 Cor. vi. 1.

2. *Secondly*, When the Miniſters of the Goſpel are here called *Labourers*, This ſhews us the Nature of our Calling. That it is by no means a Profeſſion of Eaſe and Idleneſs, but of conſtant and painful Care. When Theſe again are ſaid to be *Labourers in Harveſt*; This is ſtill a greater Reproach to Them that are ſlothful; ſince, at ſuch times, and upon that Emergency, even the lazieſt are content to work; or are thought inexcuſable, if they do not. It likewiſe intimates to us, with what Vigour and Alacrity we ſhould perform the ſeveral Offices required of us; ſince the Labour of Harveſt is not only hard, but, notwithſtanding all the Hardſhip of it, uſually attended with a ſenſible Chearfulneſs and willing Heart, above all others. And again, when we are told, that this is the *Lord's Harveſt*; this ſhews us, what End we ought chiefly to propoſe to our ſelves. That neither Honour nor Reputation, Intereſt nor Popularity, muſt be the things we ſeek; for this were to forget our Maſters, and to do our Own Buſineſs. And, however Any or All thoſe Advantages may be the Conſequence of our Fidelity and Pains; and ſuch, as we may very lawfully deſire, in their proper Place and Degree; yet the Glory of God, the Good

of Souls, the Promotion of Virtue and Truth, are, and ought to be, the principal, the conſtant Ends we ſhould aim at. Nor is it any reaſonable Mortification to our Diligence, thus not to ſeek our Selves in what we do; ſince He, who appoints us our Taſk, hath engaged to pay us noble Wages; and we have ground ſufficient always *to abound in the Work of the Lord, foraſmuch as we know, that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord. Who then is that faithful and wiſe Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Houſhold, to give them Meat in due Season? Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing.*

1 Cor. xv. 58.

Matt. xxiv. 45, 46.

But *Thirdly*, As this Paſſage quickens Us of the Clergy, in our Duty: So does it contain a great deal, which ought to put the People in mind of Theirs. And therefore I cannot but deſire every one of my Readers, in the Next Place, to look back upon the Complaint, made at the beginning of the Verſe; and ſo to obſerve the Condition of Mankind at that time, as carefully to compare it with the Church at this Day. The *Harveſt* then *was great, but the Labourers were few*; that is, (as the words have been explained already) The Men of honeſt Diſpoſitions, and ſincere Deſires to learn the Truth, did very much exceed the Proportion of thoſe, who were qualified to teach them. They wanted not ſo much the Inclination, as the Means and Opportunities, of growing better. But now, alas! the Caſe is much otherwiſe. There is (in this part of the World at leaſt) no Scarcity of Chriſtian Paſtors, no Famine of the Word, to be complained of. The Doctrines of the Goſpel are conſtantly and diligently expounded; The Motives to a holy Life urged with all the Skill and Care, that Men, not immediately inſpired by God, are capable of; The Sacraments frequently and regularly adminiſtred in our Churches; The Neceſſity and Efficacy

cy of these Means of Grace fully proved; The Invitations to accept, and to qualify ourselves for them, made in the most affectionate manner that can be; And after all, our Saviour's Parable is what we have too just Occasion to apply to our respective Congregations; *We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.* Luke vii. 32. We tell Men of the Glorious Privileges and Promises of Holiness, but These do not make them in love with it. We lay before them the Terrors of the Lord, the dreadful Consequences of neglecting their Duty, and refusing so great Salvation; but These persuade them not, nor leave any effectual Impression behind. Consider then, I beseech you, how ye will answer the reversing this Observation of our Blessed Lord. And, if *the Greatness of the Harvest*, and the Fewness of the *Labourers*, moved His Compassion then; Think with yourselves, what different Affections will be stirred in his Breast, and how it must needs provoke the great Judge to Anger and Vengeance, when the *Labourers* are so very *many*, and the *Harvest* so scandalously small. The *Labourers*, I mean, *of His sending*: For, God knows, there are too many of their own; and the Number of these is not a Mercy, but a Punishment. Which puts me in mind of a

4. *Fourth* Thing to be inferred from the Text; and *that is*, The great Care Men ought to take, in distinguishing between the regular and true, and those other busy and pragmatical Labourers, who, without any Warrant or Command from their Lord, will needs be *thrusting themselves* into *his Harvest*. It was God's Complaint by the Prophet *Jeremy* of Old, *I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.* Jer. xxiii. 21. The abounding of such Teachers, who of their own Heads intrude into so weighty a Concern, is ever represented in Scripture, as a very grievous Curse and Judgment.

And, how God comes to suffer this, St. *Paul* hath given us some account; when he says, *The time will come, when Men will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears; and they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth.* It seems, The Curiosity of the People, and their not enduring to be told necessary and plain Truths, is the beginning of this Mischief. A Mischief, which soon grows to dangerous Errors, and fatal Deceit, and a settled Dislike of sound Doctrine. For it is scarce to be expected, that They, who set up themselves, should bear the same conscientious Regard to what they deliver, as Others will, who are sensible, they come by the Direction and upon the Errand of their Master; and who know, they must be answerable for the Discharge of their Duty, to that regular and fixed Authority, by which they were sent. But still; Allowing they contain themselves within the Bounds of Truth; admitting it were true, which for the most part it is not, that their Gifts excell'd those of our lawful Pastors; yet is there still one Prejudice against them, which singly ought to weigh down all their boasted, and even supposable Advantages in other Respects; I mean, that these are not the *Labourers* sent by our *Lord*; that is, they have not the same Commission derived from Him, nor are entrusted with the Charge of Souls, as Lawful Pastors are. This is a Warning, which I could not omit, where there is given so fair an Occasion for it. And I do, in the Spirit of Meekness, and in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Beseech all those very seriously to consider it, who have suffered themselves to conceive any Prejudice to their own duly established Ministers; and who, upon any specious Pretence whatsoever, are prevailed upon to make a Breach in the Order and Unity of the Church. And for the rest, I leave this particular upon Them, with that Exhortation of St. *Paul*,

2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

(*Heb.*

(*Heb.* xiii. 17.) *Obey them that have the Rule over you*, that is, your ſpiritual Guides, *and ſubmit your ſelves: For they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give account; that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

After what hath been already ſpoken, there will certainly need but little to enforce That, which I deſign for my Laſt Inference; contained in this Command of our Saviour, *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harveſt, that he would ſend forth Labourers into his Harveſt.* The Succeſs of each Man's Undertakings in his reſpective Profeſſion, depends upon the Bleſſing of God for making the Means effectual. But the Succeſs of Miniſters is more intirely His. In Other Caſes he needs only not forbid, or at moſt command, natural Effects. But in This, when our Perſuaſion bends corrupt Minds to Truth and Goodneſs, he produces an Effect by Inſtruments, in no degree ſufficient for it. And therefore, in our daily Prayer for *the Clergy and the People*, we do moſt pertinently apply to God, as a *God who alone worketh great Marvels.* For ſuch indeed it is, to turn Mens Hearts, by the Miniſtry of their weak and ſinful Brethren; who, without the continual Dew of His Grace, muſt needs plant and water in vain. This ſhews the ſtrong Obligation Men are under, to beg of God, that he would proſper the Labours of his Miniſters: Which, how diligent, how ſkilful ſoever, will produce no Fruit, except *He give the Increaſe.* 1 Cor. iii. 5. 6. It ſhews too, of what Importance it is, to be under the Guidance of thoſe, whom the Lord of this Harveſt ſends. Becauſe They, who labour by His Command, may more fairly hope for his favourable Concurrence; than Thoſe, who preſume to run, when He never gave them Commiſſion. And laſtly, We cannot conſider the State of Chriſtianity at all, without being ſenſible of the mighty Conſequence, of being furniſhed

Furniſhed with a competent Number of Teachers; and having thoſe Teachers duly qualified for ſo important a Truſt.

St. SIMON *and St.* JUDE's *Day.*

A ſhort Account of St. SIMON.

THIS Apoſtle (to diſtinguiſh him I ſuppoſe from that other *Simon*, ſurnamed *Peter*) is ſtyled *Simon Zelotes*, or *Simon* the *Canaanite*. The Latter of which does by no means ſeem to refer to his Country or Kindred, but is indeed the ſame in Senſe with *Zelotes*, and derived from an Hebrew, as that from a Greek Word, ſignifying *Zeal*. Whether this Title was given him, in regard of any Perſonal Warmth and Vigour remarkable in him; Or, whether to denote, that he was one of that Sect called Zealots among the Jews, we know not. If upon the latter Account; his Converſion is the more remarkable. For Nothing could be more oppoſite to the Meekneſs and Gentleneſs of Chriſtianity, than the Irregularity and Fierceneſs of that Spirit, by which this Sect were actuated. A diſmal Account whereof *Joſephus* has given, in his Books of the *Jewiſh War*.

Matth. x. 4. Mark iii. 18. Luke vi. 15. Acts i. 13.

L. IV. C. 5, 6. L. V. 2, 3, 9.

That this *Simon* is the Perſon reckoned amongſt our Lord's Brethren, there ſeems little Reaſon to doubt. Except we will allow the Account in St. *Jerome*'s Catalogue, to be a good one; where all Circumſtances plainly ſhew, that the Saint of this Day is miſtaken for, and confounded with *Simeon*, the ſecond Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*. We have no Particulars concerning him in the New Teſtament,

Matth. xiii. 55. Mark vi. 3.

Teſtament, ſave only his Call to the Apoſtleſhip, and that other Paſſage referr'd to juſt now. Upon the Diſperſion of the Apoſtles, he is ſaid to have preached in *Egypt*, *Cyrene*, *Africa*, *Mauritania*, and the barbarous Parts of *Libya*. To which ſome add *Meſopotamia*; and ſay, that meeting there with St. *Jude*, they went together into *Perſia*, and there both received the Crown of Martyrdom. This Tradition might poſſibly be the Cauſe, why the Church commemorates Both together in one Feſtival. Though others are equally poſitive in a very different Report: Telling us, that he preached the Goſpel in *Britain*; and, after many Miracles wrought, and great Hardſhips endured, was at laſt put to Death for the Teſtimony of the Truth, by the then rude and barbarous Inhabitants of this Iſland.

Chryſ. in 12 Ap. Hieron. in Gal. C. 4.

Brev. Rom.

Monolog. Græc. ad X. diem Maii.

A ſhort Account of St. JUDE.

THIS Perſon is alſo reckoned with St. *Simon*, amongſt our Lord's Brethren; and, that he was certainly of that Number, we have undeniable Teſtimonies. For His own Epiſtle ſtyles him the Brother of *James*, and that *James* is by St. *Paul* ſtyled the Brother of our Lord.

Matt. xiii. 55. Mark vi. 3. *Ver.* 1. Gal. i. 19.

He is alſo called by the Evangeliſts *Thaddæus* and *Lebbæus*; Names which might probably belong to him, for Diſtinction's ſake from *Judas Iſcariot*. The former of them is ſuppoſed to have been choſen, for the Affinity of its Signification to the Name of *Judas*; for both ſignify *Praiſe*. But the Jews, ſuperſtitiouſly abſtaining from the ſacred Name of *Jehovah*, extended that Superſtition to ſeveral other Words, compoſed of the

the ſame Letters. Of which this *Jehuda* (for ſo it is at length) being one; they might probably, as they did in many like Caſes, change it in common Speech, for another, of like Importance, but different Characters.

Concerning the other Name of *Lebbæus*, Conjectures have been various. Some, deriving it from a Hebrew Word, which ſignifies the *Heart*, will have it to intimate the extraordinary Wiſdom and Courage of this Apoſtle. Others draw it from a Root, which imports a Lion; and think it an Alluſion to that Prophecy of *Jacob*, which compares his Son *Judah* to an old Lion, and a Lion's Whelp. And a learned Critick of our own Age is of Opinion, that this Name was taken from *Lebba*, a Town in *Galilee*; where he ſuppoſes this Apoſtle to have been born.

Lightfoot.

After his Call to attend upon our Lord, as one of the Twelve; we find nothing particular concerning him, except in one Paſſage of St. *John*'s Goſpel. There, interrupting our Lord's Diſcourſe, concerning His and his Father's Preſence with his Servants and Diſciples, he gives occaſion for a fuller Explication of thoſe peculiar Favours, and Influences of the Divine Spirit, which the faithful ſhould not fail of enjoying to their infinite Comfort; at the ſame time, that the reſt of the World remained incapable of them.

Ch. xiv. 22. *&c.*

After our Lord's Aſcent into Heaven, St. *Jude* preached for ſome time about *Judæa* and *Galilee*, then in *Samaria*, *Idumæa*, *Syria*, and *Meſopotamia*. I mention not *Edeſſa*; becauſe, to ſay the leaſt, it is very doubtful, whether this was the ſame *Thaddæus*, mentioned in the firſt Book of *Euſebius*'s Hiſtory. And indeed that Author ſpeaks of his *Thaddæus*, under no higher a Quality than one of the Seventy Diſciples. He is thought at laſt to have travelled into *Perſia*; and, at the Inſtigation of the *Magi* there, whom he had provoked, with open Rebukes for their Idolatrous Worſhip

Ch. xii.

Worſhip of the Sun, and for ſeveral other idle Superſtitions, to have been aſſaulted by the common People, and, after other previous Cruelties, crucified.

Euſebius mentions ſome of his Grand-children brought before *Domitian*. Wickedneſs had perplexed that Tyrant, as it generally does great Oppreſſors, with unreaſonable Jealouſies and Fears. He, no doubt, had heard of Chriſt's Kingdom; and, according to the then vulgar Error, expected the Greatneſs of it ſhortly to appear, in the Conqueſt and Diſſolution of all other Kingdoms. Underſtanding therefore that ſome of the Lineage of *David*, and Relations of *Jeſus*, yet remained; he ſent for theſe Deſcendants of St. *Jude*, and examined nicely into their Family, their Condition, and their Doctrine upon this Point. Their Anſwer to this Emperor was like that of *Jeſus* to *Pilate*, that his Kingdom is not of this World. The mean Figure they made, contributed greatly to the Credit of their Reply; inſomuch that, being thought free from any Deſign which might prejudice the Empire, and incapable of effecting Miſchief, ſuppoſing them to deſign any; they were diſmiſs'd, as below a Prince's Anger; and afterwards lived many Years, in great Authority, in the Chriſtian Church. L. III. C. 20.

The only Work St. *Jude* left behind him is that *Epiſtle*, which bears his Name. The Authority whereof, though it was for ſome time doubted, has yet been long, and upon good grounds, acknowledged by the Church. The Arguments commonly alledged on the contrary ſide, being indeed ſuch, as will equally lie againſt other parts of the New Teſtament, which have always without any Scruple been received as Canonical. The Deſign of it ſeems to be, to expoſe in their True Light the corrupt Principles and Practices of thoſe Heretucks, commonly called Gnoſticks. There is a great Reſemblance between This, and the ſecond Epiſtle of St. *Peter*. The End aimed at in Both is evidently the ſame.

The

The Arguments and Expreſſions in many Caſes are ſo much alike; that it has been diſputed, whether St. *Jude* hath here abridged that of St. *Peter*, or St. *Peter* enlarged upon this of St. *Jude*. But moſt are of the former Opinion, and indeed little Doubt can remain, whether This were not the later in time, if the 4th *Ver.* here be compared with the beginning of St. *Peter*'s Second Chapter.

The COLLECT.

Epheſ. ii. 20. O Almighty God, who haſt built thy Church upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the Head Corner Stone; Grant us ſo to be joined together in Unity of Spirit by their Doctrine, that we may be made an holy Temple acceptable unto thee, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

The EPISTLE.

PARAPHRASE. *St.* Jude i.

JUde the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt, and brother of James, to them that are ſanctified by God the Father, and preſerved by Jeſus Chriſt, and called:

2. Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied.

3. The preſent Circumſtances of Chriſtianity are ſuch, as make it my Duty to excite your Zeal to a firm Perſuaſion and vigorous aſſerting of the Orthodox Doctrines, delivered to the Church, as the Standard of that Belief, which is neceſſary to Salvation.

3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common ſalvation: it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints.

4. Which though ſome have laboured to pervert and corrupt; yet ought not this greatly to ſurprize you; becauſe not only Chriſt and his Apoſtles, but other Prophecies before them, foretold both the Crime, and the Puniſhment, of this ſort of Men.

4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into laſciviouſneſs, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

5. Whoſe wicked Snares thoſe who go into, will find no Benefit by profeſſing themſelves Members of the Church of God; for ſo were thoſe *Iſraelites* of the Church too, who periſhed for their Diſobedience in the Wilderneſs, even after partaking in the Mercy of the Deliverance out of Bondage in *Egypt*.

5. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having ſaved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards deſtroyed them that believed not.

6. Nay, the very Angels themſelves eſcaped not,

6. And the Angels which kept not their firſt eſtates but left their own habitation, he hath reſerved in everlaſting

lasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

when shewing themselves unworthy of their Dignity and Bliss in Heaven.

7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

7. An Emblem of whose everlasting Punishment we have in the irreparable Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*.

8. *Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*

8. Whose Vices these Hereticks imitate in their beastly Carnalities; and patronize their Filthiness, by false and horrid Doctrines concerning the Angels, and by Contempt of their Superiors.

COMMENT.

THE Corruptions against which the Apostle here inveighs, are such as all History of the Primitive Church charges upon the *Gnosticks*. Concerning whom my Reader had some Account, upon the Epistle for St. *John* the Evangelist's Day.

The *First* Argument he makes use of, for creating a just Detestation of these Seducers and their Principles, is, that They are the pernicious People, of whom long and frequent Warning had been given. Accordingly to Them he applies a Prediction as old as *Enoch*, Ver. 14. And of the same those many Descriptions of the *last Days* have been by most Interpreters understood, which we find given by our Lord himself, *Matth.* xxiv. and by St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 2 *Tim.* iii. as also by St. *Peter*, throughout his *Second* Epistle. And in this Sense it is, that some ancient and very good Expositors understand, that they were said here to be προγεγραμμένοι. A Sense manifestly true, and less liable to Exception, than that very harsh one, which applies the Word to an absolute Decree, by which both the Crime and the Punishment of those Men was predetermined inevitably by Almighty God.

2. His Next Argument is taken from the Wickedness of the Tenets and Practices of these Hereticks: The Incon-

Inconſiſtence of Both with the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the Infamy from thence derived upon it: While they had ſtill the Confidence to profeſs a Religion, to which both their Converſation and their Doctrine was a downright Contradiction. This will be plain to any, who reflect upon the Carnalities of thoſe impure *Nicolaitans*, Who curſed the Confinements of Marriage, as a Contrivance of the Devil; and pleaded for Community of Women, as a Privilege, which ought not to be refuſed to our Species, ſince Nature had indulged other Creatures in promiſcuous Mixtures. Theſe and ſuch like unclean Doctrines were taken into the Gnoſtick Scheme: Doctrines ſo far from comporting with the Chaſtity of the Goſpel, that the irreconcileable Oppoſition between them is emphatically repreſented by *Light* and *Darkneſs*. And therefore, had there been no Other, as indeed there were Many, this alone had been reaſon ſufficient, for ſtyling the Authors and Abettors of ſuch Senſualities, *Ungodly Men, turning the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs*, and even thus (as well as by *Simon Magus* declaring himſelf God the Father to the *Samaritans*, and God the Son to the *Jews*) *denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*.

3. A *Third* Argument is the Certainty of their Puniſhment, notwithſtanding any Exemptions they might flatter themſelves with, on account of their retaining to the Church and People of God. This Vanity he expoſes, by Inſtances of Judgments heretofore overtaking Perſons, who enjoyed the Protection of the ſame or greater Privileges. For the former whereof, relating to the *Iſraelites*, I refer my Reader to the Epiſtle for *Sund.* IX. *after Trin.* And for the Latter, to That on *Mich. Day*.

The

The GOSPEL.

John xv. 17.

PARAPHRASE.

17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before that it hated you.*

18. Let this encourage you in your Sufferings for the Truth, that I have been already treated after the ſame manner, and upon the ſame account.

19. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

20. *Remember the word that I ſaid unto you, The ſervant is not greater than his lord. If they have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you: if they have kept my ſaying, they will keep yours alſo.*

19, 20. See the Comment.

21. *But all theſe things will they do unto you for my Name's ſake, becauſe they know not him that ſent me.*

22. *If I had not come, and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloak for their ſin.*

23. *He that hateth me, hateth my Father alſo.*

24. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin: but now have they both ſeen, and hated both me and my Father.*

21, 22, 23, 24. This Behaviour is the Effect of their not attending to the Commiſſion I come with; Nor to the Evidences of it; which have been far ſuperior to any ever given before of any Teacher coming from God. So that their Infidelity does not proceed from Ignorance, but from affected Blindneſs, and Obſtinacy, and Malice againſt God. For the Deſpite done to me, who have been authorized and thus eminently atteſted by God, does not terminate in my Perſon, but is done to God himſelf.

25. *But this cometh to paſs that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, they hated me without a cauſe.*

25. Mean while that Prophetick Complaint of *David* (*Pſal.* lxix. 4.) never was ſo ſignally fulfilled, as upon this Occaſion, *They hated*, &c.

26. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me.*

27. *And ye alſo ſhall bear witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me from the beginning.*

26, 27. See Goſp. for Sund. after Aſcenſion.

COMMENT.

THE Immediate Deſign of our Lord in this Scripture, is to leave ſuch Impreſſions on the Minds of his Diſciples, as might preſerve their Faith, and buoy up their Hearts, in the midſt of thoſe Diſtreſſes and Perſecutions, which they were ſhortly to encounter in Execution of the Truſt repoſed in them; the propagating and eſtabliſhing his Bleſſed Goſpel. His Arguments to this purpoſe are chiefly Two. *Firſt*, That they ſuffered after their Lord's Example: And *Secondly*, That the Cauſe, in which they engaged, was ſuch, as might reaſonably ſupport them under any Hardſhips upon that Account. The Former of Theſe I ſhall ſo conſider, as to include all ſorts of Affliction incident to good Men; The Latter, ſo as may abate our Surprize, and arm us with Patience, when the Endeavours of Holy Perſons to promote the Honour of God and Religion, do at any time provoke Oppoſition and Deſpite.

Now *Firſt*, How high ſoever Matters may be carried againſt us, or how hard ſoever they may bear upon us; it could not but be then to theſe Diſciples, it muſt in reaſon be to every Good Man, a mighty Conſolation, that the ſame Malice and Scorn, the ſame Difficulties and Sufferings, fell upon the Son of God; and that, in this reſpect alſo, the Great Author and Captain of our Salvation did not diſdain to become our Leader and Pattern. The Streſs, fit to be laid upon this Argument, may eaſily be collected from the frequent Occaſions taken to inculcate it. It is true, that the Applications generally made of it do regard the Reproach and Contempt, the Perſecutions and Pains, ſuſtained upon Accounts purely Religious; and eſpecially

Matth. x. 24. Luke vi. 40. John xiii. 16.

ally by the firſt Planters of the Chriſtian Faith. But, in regard the Son of God condeſcended to other Griefs both of Nature and of Fortune; In regard that Theſe alſo are by the wiſe Ordering of God: As no Followers of this Maſter ought to think it ſtrange, if they find no better regard from Men than He did; So it is much more manifeſt, they have no reaſon to repine at Providence; when called to ſuffer, in any other kind, what He hath felt and ſubmitted to before them. For what is the beſt and greateſt of the Sons of Men, in Compariſon of this Eternal Son of God? It is confeſt, no Injury was done to the Dignity and Innocence of this Divine Perſon, becauſe he freely conſented to this Humiliation. But then this ought to reconcile us to thoſe ſeverer Diſpenſations; when God himſelf thought it no Diminution to the Perfections of his Nature, to become a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief. It could not have conſiſted with thoſe Perfections, to conſent to any thing unworthy of God; And what it did not miſbecome Him to chuſe, cannot poſſibly be beneath Us to accept. Shall we grumble at Poverty, when the Lord of the whole Earth had not where to lay his Head, and was ſuſtained by the zealous Miniſtry of Others; Shall we be enraged and impatient for Affronts and Diſgrace, when the Majeſty of the Holy One was traduced and blaſphemed, buffeted and ſpit upon, ſcourged and crucified? Shall we grumble at Sickneſs and Pain, when we remember His Agonies and Tortures? or accuſe God for hiding from us the chearing Light of his Countenance, and the comfortable Senſe of his Favour and Love; when we read of his Soul heavy and ſorrowful even unto Death; of his Amazements and inward Confuſions, and ſuch a Suſpenſion of the Divine Preſence, as, added to the Extremities of a moſt bitter Bodily Torment, forced from him a Complaint of God's having forſaken him? What do the moſt deſtitute, moſt miſerable of Men endure, that

can be named with His unſpeakable Griefs? What are the Migheſt, the Holieſt of Them, if put into the Balance with Him? Far be it then from Us, to think that Meaſure hard, which hath been meted to the Holy Jeſus! Far from us, to receive with Murmuring and Indignation, what he hath condeſcended to! Far, to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould be unjuſt, in making us happy by the ſelf-ſame Methods, which exalted the Human Nature of his Son to the Throne on High! Far from us eſpecially, when we conſider, that all he underwent was the Effect of Love and Free Choice; but that Our Afflictions are the Effect of Neceſſity, and ſuch as we are wiſely and juſtly deſtined to.

Let us next conſider the Cauſe, which engaged theſe Diſciples, and proportionably all zealous Promoters of the Honour of God and Religion. And This will miniſter one mighty Support, by repreſenting the Ground of the World's Hatred to be common to Chriſt and his Diſciples. So that they, who treated the One ill, cannot, if they will act conſiſtently with themſelves, deal friendly or reſpectfully by the Other. This Subject hath indeed been touched upon before; but, upon offering it ſelf again, I will now enter into it a little more particularly.

It was formerly obſerved, how vain it is to expect, that any Scheme of Religion, or the Author and Profeſſors of ſuch a Scheme, ſhould recommend themſelves to the World, or be much in its good Graces; Since they do not only not ſuit with the Diſpoſitions and Practices moſt in Vogue; but take upon them to rebuke, and, if it be poſſible, to deſtroy theſe, and bring in the direct contrary in their ſtead. Now how this was the Caſe of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and is ſo in ſome degree of the Preachers and conſcientious Profeſſors of the Goſpel ever ſince, though it be plain enough one would think of it ſelf, yet it may not be amiſs a little to explain.

The

The Appearance of Chriſt in the Fleſh, his Birth, and Manner of Living, were very mean and ordinary, and this begat in the *Jews* a great Averſion to him; as did afterwards the ſcandalous Circumſtances of the Death he vouchſafed to die, in *Jews* and *Gentiles* both.

But beſides the diſappointed Expectation of a Meſſias, Glorious and Triumphant over the Temporal Enemies of the *Jewiſh* State, the very Temper and Deſign of Chriſt's Doctrines in general is ſuch, as contradicts the common Diſpoſition of Mankind, And this is a Reaſon, why it always had, and always will have, a numerous Party againſt it; not only in the Seaſons of Perſecution, but in thoſe of Peace and publick Tranquillity; not among profeſt Infidels alone, but pretending Believers and Admirers of it.

The Conſtitution of Mankind, as now corrupted by Sin and Concupiſence, diſpoſes them to Pride and a mighty Conceit of their own Abilities. It blows them up with fond Opinions of Knowledge; and when, by comparing themſelves with Creatures of an inferior Condition, they find, that Reaſon is the peculiar Talent, with which the Great Lord of all things hath enriched Human Nature; they grow big with their Privilege, and are loth to allow that any Bounds ſhould be ſet to it. Now the Doctrine of our Saviour, though in the practical Part it carry the moſt perfect Agreement to the beſt Reaſon; and there is not any one Precept in the whole Scheme of it, which may not very fairly be accounted for; yet it propoſes withal ſeveral Articles to be received, which are full of Myſtery, and by no means of a Size with Finite Underſtandings. Hence ariſes the Virtue mentioned by St. *Paul*, of *bringing every Thought into Captivity*, and paying that, which is upon this account moſt Emphatically ſtyled the *Obedience of Faith*; that is, to reſt upon the Truth and Revelation of God, and ſilently to adore what we

2 Cor. x. 5.

Rom. xvi. 26.

cannot comprehend. Now This hath all along given People a Prejudice to the Chriſtian Religion, and provoked them either to deny, and oppoſe, and ridicule it; or, which is but little better, to mangle and pare it away, till they have brought it down to the Model of their own Comprehenſions. All which is the Effect of an inborn, abſurd Vanity; that knows nothing above one's ſelf in Wiſdom, and will not allow the Great God to ſay or do any thing, which wretched ignorant Man cannot conceive and explain.

Very near of Kin to this ſort of Pride is that Other; by which we are led into falſe Notions of our Virtues and Performances, and ſwelled with Imaginations of our own Worth. And thence ariſes another Averſion againſt Chriſt and his Religion; in regard it obliges Men to diſdain all Merit of their own; breaks all the falſe Glaſſes, which Nature or Induſtry had held to them; and ſhews them to themſelves, without a Magnifier, the very ſame impotent, frail, ſinful Creatures, that really they are. It lays their Mouths in the Duſt, and declares all Fleſh guilty before God: ſo that no Acceptance, no Salvation is to be expected for any Righteouſneſs of theirs; a Righteouſneſs interrupted and blemiſhed with a Mixture of many bad Actions; a Righteouſneſs ſhort and imperfect in its very beſt Actions; and therefore ſtanding in need of an unſpotted Innocence, a compleat Obedience, a ſufficient Propitiation, to be juſtified and ſaved by; to atone for Miſcarriages, to fill up what is wanting through Weakneſs, and to recommend the imperfect, when they are honeſt, Endeavours. This was the Choqueing Principle to the *Jews*; as rendring Their Law unable to effect what they promiſed themſelves from it. And it is ſo to all Men; For almoſt All do ſo far Judaize, as to depend upon Carnal Confidences; and rather truſt to the Sandy Bottom of their own Worth and ſuppoſed Sufficiency, than renounce that wicked Partiality of admiring

admiring and truſting in themſelves. So hard a Submiſſion is it, in good Earneſt, to confeſs themſelves Objects of Mercy, and to caſt their whole Hopes of Comfort and Safety, upon the Sufferings and Services of a Crucified Redeemer.

Again, The Condition of our Nature hath made us ſubject to different ſorts of Deſires and Inclinations. For, by conſiſting of a Body as well as a Soul, we are neceſſarily wrought upon by the Motions of Both. This was no Inconvenience in our Original Make; becauſe then each part knew and kept its Diſtance, and the Senſual ſubmitted to the Dictates and Directions of the Reaſonable Soul. But, ſince that Order hath been confounded by the Fall and Corruption of Man, nothing but Rebellion, and Diſcord, and perpetual Struggles have enſued. The Paſſions gather and get Head, and oftentimes hurry us away, not only beyond, but even contrary to Reaſon. They propoſe to us Objects, which Conſideration cannot like; and betray us into Extravagancies, which our cooler and ſoberer Senſe is heartily aſhamed of. Now the Deſign of Chriſtianity is to reduce theſe Rebels, to deliver our Minds from Uſurpation and Tyranny, and to ſettle the Rightful Sovereign, Reaſon, in the Throne again. It ſhews us the Folly of enſlaving ourſelves to violent Appetites, and teaches us to proceed upon the Meaſures of Good and Evil, and to make our Choices according to the real Proportion of that Good and that Evil. To This, one would think, Men ſhould eaſily be brought; But here lies the Difficulty: that the Goſpel propounds the Happineſs we ought to ſeek as a very diſtant thing; and turns us over to a long Day, a future and inviſible State, for the Attainment of it. And yet at the ſame time it expects ſo ſtedfaſt Affiance in God's Word, and ſo fixed a Reſolution in our Duty; that, if we are called to Suffering, no Hardſhip muſt be thought too great to undergo for His ſake; and, if the whole World were to be

had in Exchange for our Souls, that is, with the Commiſſion of one wilful deliberate Sin, which will expoſe our Souls to Damnation, and the Wrath of God; we are taught to refuſe thoſe Terms, as being not only an unlawful, but an imprudent Bargain. Now theſe things are ſuch, as require a very exalted Virtue to comply with them; and though a Man when he ſits down coolly, may be able to convince himſelf, that they demand nothing of us but what is highly reaſonable; yet it requires more than bare Speculation, to behave one's ſelf accordingly in a preſent Streight. Our Saviour compares thoſe to Corn in Stony Ground, who receive the Word with Joy, and in time of Temptation fall away: That is, Agreeably to his own Interpretation of the Parable, who had conſidered and underſtood the Doctrines he taught, and were highly ſatisfied in the Fitneſs of what God expected from them; but yet, when any uncommon Trial happened to make an Aſſault, the ſame Conſideration did not ſerve them in the time of greateſt Exigency. Some alluring Proſpect of Pleaſure or Profit blinded their Eyes; Some horrid Appearance of Danger frighted away all their Preſence of Mind; and ſo Senſe prevailed againſt Reaſon, and either juſtled it quite aſide, or elſe bore it down in the Conflict. This is the Condition of ſuch, as we are content to think Good Men for the main; but, as for them, who have given themſelves up to work all manner of Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs, They have ſent up their Reſt in preſent Enjoyments, and entertain all Exhortations to a ſober and ſevere Virtue, all Threatnings and Promiſes that concern a future State, with Drollery and Scorn. And if a Syſtem of Goodneſs and Sobriety, of Meekneſs and Mortification, do not ſuit the Reliſh of an Intemperate, and Revengeful, and Narrow-ſpirited Man, we are not to wonder. The Reformation of Manners, and introducing a pure and Spiritual Worſhip, in the room of thoſe abominable Rites

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and Beaſtly Myſteries of Heathen Idols, made the Goſpel ſo hard of Digeſtion to the *Gentiles*. The requiring ſubſtantial Holineſs of Heart and Life, and throwing off the Levitical Diſpenſation, which conſiſted in Ceremony, and cheated Men with a falſe Hope in External Sanctifications, made it offenſive to the *Jews*. And all the looſe and diſſolute part of the World have the ſame Quarrel to it ſtill. Our Lord was inſtant and bold in reproving the *Jews*, and ſhewing them their Faults; his Miniſters are commanded to *cry aloud, and ſhew the People their Tranſgreſſions*; to ſet before them what they do not care to ſee; and preſs them perpetually to that, which they do not like to practiſe. This made him ſo ſpitefully uſed; and the ſame invidious and unwelcome Office will not fail to entail the ſame Coldneſs and Diſreſpect and Deſpite upon Us. And ſince thoſe, who are not ſent with ſpecial Commiſſions, but only diſcharge the Duty of private Chriſtians well, do yet by their Good Works reproach and expoſe the bad ones of ill Men, who *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; They alſo muſt expect to come in for a Share in the ſame angry Reſentments. Could there any poſſible way be found out to accommodate Precepts to Inclinations, ſuch an Expedient would have reconciled the World to Chriſtianity. But, when it was declared, that there is an abſolute Neceſſity of denying Ungodlineſs; of abandoning this, or giving over all Thoughts of Heaven, and Hopes of Happineſs; the only Method left for People wedded to Worldly and Carnal Luſts, was, and we ſee daily is, taken up. And that is, when Truth cannot be for Them, nor Religion bend to their Liberties and vitiated Palates; to take Diſtaſte at Truth, and, by way of Revenge, to reſolve, that they will no longer be for Religion.

The Perſons and the Principles then of Chriſt and his Diſciples are hated, and diſcountenanced; But it is

becauſe they give the firſt Provocation; becauſe they are too Divine, too Good for polluted Wretches; and Men, who have not the Grace to be reformed by them, think it for their Intereſt to run them down. This is a Refuge, to cover the Deformity of their own Vices and to keep Sin in countenance, by proclaiming War againſt that, which can never be at Peace with it. Juſtice and Charity to the Poor are grievous, but it is to the Covetous and Ill-natured that they are ſo. Humility, and Meekneſs, and Poverty of Spirit are decryed, and ridiculed; but they are the Inſolent and the Proud, that endeavour to expoſe them. Forgiveneſs of Injuries, and putting up of Affronts are rallied; but the Reaſon is, becauſe they tie up our Hands from Cruelty and Revenge. Suffering for Righteouſneſs ſake is traduced as a moſt unnatural Duty, and extravagant Hardineſs; but it is by thoſe, who are ſunk into Fleſh and Senſe, and have either no Belief, or but very poor and weak Notions, of the Kingdom and Crown hereafter, and that Eternal Weight of Glory, to which ſuch gallant Fidelity entitles us. Thus the Caſe plainly ſtands in all the other Inſtances. For even the ſevereſt of theſe Virtues juſtify themſelves to impartial and good Men. Every one is content to allow the Reaſonableneſs of Religion abſtractedly conſidered; or ſo far as it ſuits his own Complexion, or Humour; his Satisfaction, or his Intereſt. But, when once it comes to grate cloſe, when it croſſes his Appetites, and goes againſt the Grain, when it robs him of any delightful Enjoyment already in Poſſeſſion, or checks him in the Purſuit of any in View; then he ſhakes Hands, and can be no longer Friends with it. The Frugal and Covetous Man ſees the Fitneſs of Temperance, and Induſtry, and all thoſe Commands, that forbid Luxury, and Riot, and every vain and immoderate Expence. The Profuſe and Senſual diſcern and deteſt the Deformity of Avarice. Thus every part

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of Religion approves itſelf to the Judgment of the diſintereſted and unprejudiced. But let us turn the Tables, and apply the Rules to each Man's own Vice; Tell the Voluptuous, that if he will be Chriſt's, he muſt crucify his Affections and Luſts; and the Miſer, that the Matter can never be compounded between God and Mammon; and then, Oh! Theſe are hard Sayings, who can hear them? The Man of Pleaſures, and the Man of Poſſeſſions, will then go away ſorrowful, like the Rich Youth in the Goſpel; and think it a hard Bargain to ſell his Lands, or his Delights, though never ſo much aſſured, that he ſhall purchaſe Heaven in Exchange.

So evident is it, that the World hates Goodneſs and Good Men, becauſe itſelf is wicked. The general Acknowledgment of Mathematical Truths hath very reaſonably been thought to proceed, not entirely from the clear and demonſtrable Certainty of them, but in ſome Degree from hence, that Men can have no Intereſt in oppoſing them. It ſignifies nothing to any Man's Pleaſure or his Profit, whether the Right Angle of a Triangle be equal to the other Two; no one Deſire is curbed or gratified, no Advantage, no ſenſual Enjoyment, promoted or debarred one whit, by its being thus, or otherwiſe. But in all Moral Truths we ourſelves are Parties, as well as Judges, and have ſome end or other to ſerve in pronouncing of them. Our Affections here, like a corrupt Jury, are bribed before-hand, and not at Liberty to receive the Evidence as it is. So that, in order to doing Juſtice, much Temper and a ſincere candid Sentence is needful; and this cannot be had, but from Perſons of Integrity and unblameable Lives. Such Men can approve what condemns Wickedneſs, becauſe they have no Byaſs upon their Minds, and are under no Fear of being reproached by their own Conſciences. But a profligate Liver knows, that he condemns himſelf at the ſame time; and ſo is forced

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to reject openly, or at leaſt muſt ſeem to diſallow, Religion in his own Defence. And it is a very fatal as well as a very common Conſequence of Sin, to propagate itſelf from the Affections to the Judgment; to drive Men from Conſideration, and either incline them not to think at all, or at leaſt to hinder them from thinking true. For Paſſion and Guilt will darken the Glaſs quite, or elſe ſo confound the Diſtances and Colours, that no Objects ſhall appear there, as they really are.

So then, if Virtue and Vice were to ſtand and fall by the Poll; Chriſtianity might be in ſome Danger. But ſince it is not the Majority, ſo much as the Quality of Voices, that wiſe Men value; there can be no poſſible good Reaſon, why the common Hatred or Contempt of Religion ſhould make us one jot the leſs in love with it. For the Votes of thoſe againſt it are of no moment in the World. They are the Clamours of Fools, the Ravings of Mad-men, or the perverſe Oppoſitions of a Faction; Men, whoſe Diſhoneſty and whoſe Intereſt ought in all Equity to be excepted againſt, and therefore theſe are in Effect but ſo many Cyphers, Ten Thouſand of which, when alone, make no Number. And ſure that Man's Principles and Reſolution are very weak, who will ſuffer himſelf to be carried away by the Torrent of a ſenſeleſs or a prejudiced Multitude: Who will be jeſted out of the Practice of Godlineſs, which hath no Enemies, that are worthy to be its Friends; but, if it were leſs lovely, would not fail to be more generally beloved.

ALL SAINTS *Day*.

The COLLECT.

O Almighty God, who haſt knit together thine Elect in one Communion and Fellowſhip, in the Myſtical Body of thy Son Chriſt our Lord; Grant us Grace ſo to follow thy Bleſſed Saints in all virtuous and Godly Living, that we may come to thoſe unſpeakable Joys, which thou haſt prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

Col. i. 18.
Eph. iii. 15.
---iv. 15, 16.

The EPISTLE.

Rev. vii. 2.

2. *AND I ſaw another Angel aſcending from the Eaſt, having the ſeal of the living God: And he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the ſea,*

PARAPHRASE.

2. After the intended Judgments upon Idolaters and Infidels, repreſented *Ver.* 1. God was pleaſed to ſignify his Reſolution to ſave from the common Calamity thoſe faithful Servants, who had been careful to ſave themſelves pure from the common Corruption.

3. *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the ſea, nor the trees, till we have ſealed the ſervants of our God in their foreheads.*

3. And this Signification was made, by the form of an Angel (Chriſt himſelf, as Some, or, as Others, one of thoſe Good Spirits commiſſioned and ſent by him) declaring this Merciful Decree of God; and commanding the other Spirits, who were about to inflict the Judgments, to ſuſpend the Execution of them, till a diſcriminating Mark was ſet on thoſe, whoſe Fidelity had moved God to except them out of the Power of hurting, allowed to take place on all, not ſo diſtinguiſhed.

4. *And I heard the number of them which were ſealed: and there were ſealed an hundred and forty and four thouſand of all the tribes of the children of Iſrael.*

4. The Converted *Jews*, who partook of the Mercy, were repreſented to me, as ſealed, a certain Number of every Tribe.

5. *Of the tribe of Judah were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Reuben were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Gad were ſealed twelve thouſand.*

5. See the Comment.

6.

6. *Of the tribe of Aſer were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Manaſſes were ſealed twelve thouſand.*

7. *Of the tribe of Simeon were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Levi were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Iſſachar were ſealed twelve thouſand.*

8. *Of the tribe of Zabulon were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Joſeph were ſealed twelve thouſand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were ſealed twelve thouſand.*

9, 10. Then appeared to me Gentile Converts, in vaſt Numbers; repreſenting the Church Catholick all the World over, with Marks of Innocence and victorious Conſtancy; and theſe were in the Preſence of God and Chriſt, worſhipping, and unanimouſly praiſing his Mercy, for their Deliverance out of, and Conqueſt over, their Tryals.

9. *After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands;*

10. *And cryed with a loud voice, ſaying, Salvation to our God which ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.*

11, 12. In which Acts of Devotion and Thankſgiving the Heavenly Powers, and all the Church triumphant, did likewiſe ſeem to joyn: Repeating and Confirming the ſame Laud and Adoration. By thoſe United Hearts and Voices teſtifying their Unity with the Church on Earth: And teaching us, what Order and Agreement there ought to be, in all the Members that compoſe this Body.

11. *And all the Angels ſtood round about the Throne, and about the Elders, and the four beaſts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worſhipped God.*

12. *Saying, Amen: Bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

COMMENT.

I Do not propoſe upon this Occaſion to detain my Reader, with the Diſputes ſet on foot by Interpreters of this Book, concerning thoſe Events, and that State of the Chriſtian Church, to which the Paſſage before us is ſeverally applied. Let Them, who have Learning and Leiſure ſufficient, amuſe themſelves with theſe Matters. My Buſineſs, whoſe End is Godly Edifying, ſhall be only to explain ſome few Things, relating to the Manner and Expreſſion, and afterwards to make

make uſe of the Subſtance, of this Viſion; as They, who have recommended it, ſeem to have thought moſt profitable, and moſt appoſite to the Deſign of this Feſtival.

1. The Viſion of *an Angel* ſent to *mark the Servants of God*, is agreeable to what we read, in other places of Scripture, to have been done in Favour, and for a Diſtinction to them, whom God ſaw fit to reſcue out of ſome great and general Calamity. Thus we find the Blood of the Paſſover commanded to be put upon the *Iſraelitiſh* Houſes, as a Token for the Angel, which deſtroyed the Firſt-born of the *Ægyptians*, to forbear any Execution, where this Preſervative appeared. Thus in *Ezekiel*'s Viſion, the ſix Slayers, ordered to paſs through the City, were ſtrictly enjoyned to hold their hand; till one, ſent forth for that purpoſe, had firſt *ſet a Mark* of Exemption *on the Foreheads of them that ſighed and cried for all the Abominations done in the midſt thereof.* And in like manner here, *The Angel, who had the four Winds in his hand*, is not allowed *to hurt the Earth*, nor *the Sea*, *nor the Trees*; *till thoſe Servants of God were ſealed in their Foreheads*, whom he had determined to ſave from this Deſtruction.

Exod. xii.

Chap. ix.

Ver. 4.

Ver. 1. 2.

It may well be doubted, what particular Judgment thoſe Metaphorical Terms of *hurting the Earth, and the Sea, and the Trees* imported. Whether, as *Some* have thought, The Vengeance upon *Jeruſalem* and *Judea*; Or, as *Others*, The barbarous Havock made at the Diſſolution of the *Roman* Empire; Or, as a *Third* Sort, The Cruelties exerciſed, nearer our own Times, upon Them, who refuſed to comply with the Idolatries and Corruption of Antichriſt. But ſtill, All acknowledge ſome diſmal Calamity to be meant, from which theſe *ſealed* were to eſcape: And, that the Uſe and End of

ſealing

ſealing them was to make this Mark a Defence againſt that Ruin, in which the greater Numbers, not ſo ſigned, ſhould be miſerably ſwallowed up.

2. A like Alluſion to former Diſpenſations we may alſo obſerve, in the numbring of theſe *ſealed*. The Correſpondence between *Iſrael after the Fleſh* and *Iſrael after the Spirit*, between the Church of God under the Law and under the Goſpel, hath frequently fallen in the way of our Notice before. And from thence the Reaſonableneſs of thoſe Modes of Speech is very obvious, which apply ſuch Terms to the Latter, as in their Primary and Literal Senſe are peculiar to the Former. As well therefore upon this Account of the People of God being heretofore divided into Tribes; As becauſe the Chriſtian State, which ſucceeded upon the *Jewiſh*, was for ſome time compoſed of Members proſelyted from that Religion; The Servants of God, *ſealed* under the Goſpel, are diſtributed here into Tribes.

3. Concerning the Order, in which we find them placed, The Conjectures of Expoſitors are neither ſo clear as to be depended on; nor of Moment ſo great, as to deſerve any particular Diſquiſition. Thus much however may be worth our mention. That *Judah*, it is very probable, ſtands in the Front; Not only, becauſe the Poſt of Honour was aſſigned that Tribe, in the Encampments and Motions of the whole Body of *Iſrael* heretofore: But, which indeed (conſidering the Typical State of the People heretofore) might be the Reaſon of the Preference then given it by God, becauſe ſuch Prerogative was due to that Tribe, of which Chriſt, the King and Univerſal Lord of God's true People, condeſcended to be born.

4. It is farther obſervable, that the Order of the Tribes throughout is different in This place, from that uſual in Others. For they are ſometimes named, according

cording to the Age of the Patriarchs, from whom they ſprang: Sometimes according to the Dignity of the Mothers, that bore thoſe Patriarchs: Sometimes, according to the Situation of their reſpective Settlements in the Holy Land.

Now, whatever were the Reaſon of taking another Method here, this Reflection at leaſt it miniſters juſt ground for: *That*, under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, there is no Reſpect of Perſons, no Deference paid to Wealth, or to Nobility of Deſcent, or to Priority of Birth, or to any of thoſe other Conſiderations, which ſet one Man above Another, in the Regards of this World. But all who are truly in Chriſt, be they otherwiſe *bond or free*, *high or low*, *rich or poor*, have equal Concern in the Diſtribution of Spiritual Advantages. And, as Each ſhall be careful to diſtinguiſh himſelf, by Virtue and Obedience; he ſhall not fail to receive proportionably diſtinguiſhing Marks of the Divine Grace and Bounty.

5. Again, In this Catalogue, the Tribe uſually called *Ephraim* hath the Name of *Joſeph*. That of *Dan* is wholly paſs'd over; and the Number is made complete by taking in *Levi*. The firſt might probably be done, to leave a Note of Infamy upon a Name, known for many Ages to have been ſet up in Oppoſition to *Judah*, and made the common Title of Rebels and Schiſmaticks; Revolters from the Government as ſettled in the Line of *David*, and Separatiſts from the Eſtabliſhed Church at *Jeruſalem*. A Name, upon ſo many Accounts grown ſcandalous, may well be exchanged, in a Catalogue of Chriſtian Confeſſors, for One; which, by the mention of *Ephraim*'s Anceſtor, naturally brings to mind that Innocence and Conſtancy in Suffering, and that Reward and Exaltation conſequent to it, wherein the Patience and Preſervation of the *Sealed* bore ſo eminent a Reſemblance to the Virtues and Fortunes of *Joſeph*.

Again, In regard the Perſecutions ſuſtained by theſe Good Men, were provoked by their inflexible Adherence to the One True God, and the Purity of his Worſhip; the Tribe of *Dan*, which firſt apoſtatized to Idolatry, and, from the Time of *Jereboam*, received the Calves by which that Corruption had been all along continued, was altogether unworthy to be mentioned here, as a Type of pure and unblemiſhed Chriſtians. Into His Place therefore *Levi* is fitly taken; Who, though frequently omitted in the Old Teſtament, becauſe having no Inheritance in the Partition of the Earthly *Canaan*; was yet, of all others, moſt proper to repreſent thoſe Heavenly-minded Saints, who choſe to make the Lord their only *Portion*, by *forſaking all* and *following him*.

6. Once more. From the Number of theſe *Sealed*, we are by no means warranted to conclude, that ſo many, or that no more, were ſaved out of each Tribe of *Iſrael*. But, as the manner of reckoning by Tribes was ſhewn to be alluſive, ſo is the Number of the *Sealed* in Each, alluſive too: And, as That had a Retroſpect to the Old Diſpenſation, This bears a particular regard to the Miniſters of the New. The Converſions wrought among their own Countrymen, might well be repreſented by many Thouſands in every Tribe; for this was but Juſtice to the wonderful Succeſs of their indefatigable Labours. And thoſe Thouſands are moſt fitly multiplied by Twelve: Becauſe this was an Honour due to the College of the Apoſtles; The principal Labourers in this Spiritual Harveſt, and the Fathers who begat ſo Glorious a Progeny in Chriſt.

Thus we have another Inſtance of the Analogy, frequent in theſe Myſtical Writers, between the Legal and Evangelical People of God; Such as we find expreſſed in the *Walls*, and Foundations, and Angels, and Gates, and Dimenſions

Rev. xxi. 12, 13, 14.

menſions of the New *Jeruſalem*: All theſe agree in the Numbers here made uſe of; and are abundantly explain'd by thoſe very ſignificant Words, that in the *Twelve Foundations* of that City-wall were inſcribed *the Names of the Twelve Apoſtles of the Lamb*. The Number of which noble Fraternity, multiplied by it ſelf, produces that Sum of *Jewiſh* Converts here, who, by adhering ſtedfaſtly to their Doctrine and Fellowſhip, approved themſelves the genuine Offspring of the Apoſtles.

7. The ſame Method, we obſerve, is not taken at the *Nnth* Verſe; becauſe there was no like Analogy to juſtify or ground it upon. For the Multitude there meant, are moſt probably the Gentile Converts. A Multitude, *which no Man could Number* indeed: So amazingly preſent and powerful was the Grace of God with them. A Race of Aliens, whoſe Zeal outran the Children of the Family: Who, from the vileſt Dregs of Superſtition and Idolatry, commenced a Church of Purity and Conſtancy, of unreproached Conduct and unalienable Affection to that Heavenly Spouſe, who diſdained not ſo mean a Marriage; even *Jeſus Chriſt*. For as the Greatneſs of their Tryals proved their Fidelity; ſo the Succeſs of their Fidelity is intimated by their *Palms* and *White Robes*. And the Reward of their Victorious Innocence is particularly ſet forth, from *Ver*. 13, to the End of this Chapter.

8. Interpreters have differed in their Opinions concerning the Seal, ſaid here to be ſet on the Foreheads of the *Hundred and Forty Four Thouſand*. Some have underſtood it of the Sign of the Croſs, anciently made upon the Foreheads of Perſons baptized. A Ceremony, as then uſed in the Primitive, and as ſtill retained in Our Eſtabliſhed Church, not only altogether innocent, but highly ſignificant and proper. For it is no other, than a conſtant Admonition and *Token*,

that the Parties receiving it, ſhould from thenceforth *not be aſhamed to confeſs the Faith of Chriſt crucified:* And, with Alluſion to the Cuſtoms then obtaining among Soldiers and Servants, to receive the Mark of that Maſter, or General, under whoſe Command they were: This was a liſting Men to Chriſt, a Mark of their Obligation to *fight Manfully under his Banner*, and to *continue his faithful Soldiers and Servants unto their Life's End.*

Office of Baptiſm.

Others, obſerving the Sacrament of Baptiſm at large to be frequently by the Ancients ſtyled the *Signature of Chriſt*, apply the Expreſſion to that Covenant, in a Senſe ſomewhat more extended than the Former. Mean while theſe Conſtructions come much to one; in regard the Latter very probably depends upon the Former. For the Sign of the Croſs, uſed in that Sacrament, ſeems to have given occaſion to the Sacrament itſelf being alluſively entituled, *Signaculum*, *Character*, *Signum in frontibus*, the Mark or Signature of the Diſciples of Chriſt.

But, as hath been obſerved under the *Firſt* Particular, the Seal here intended, cannot be reaſonably thought that of Profeſſion, but is plainly a Seal of Preſervation and Protection. This Caſe bears great Reſemblance to the *Iſraelites* Paſſover, mentioned before. Their Eating the Lamb and Sprinkling the Blood were neceſſary Preliminaries; but the Blood it ſelf upon the Door, as a Teſtimony of the Law being regularly complied with, was that which averted the deſtroying Angel. Thus the Seal of Chriſtianity is ſo far only concerned in the preſent Occaſion; as this Seal, being kept inviolate, engaged that other Seal of Divine Providence and Favour on Their Behalf, who kept it ſo. And the peculiar Care, which Almighty God determined ſhould be taken, to reſcue Such from the common Calamity, which overwhelmed Others, not under the ſame diſtinguiſhing Providence: is by

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an elegant Figure repreſented here as a viſible Character, impreſs'd for a Direction to the Executioners of Divine Vengeance, that theſe were to be ſpared, as Perſons exempted from it.

It muſt be confeſs'd indeed, that the Grace and Providence of Almighty God never ſhone forth upon any Occaſion more illuſtriouſly, than in this of eſtabliſhing and preſerving the Chriſtian Church. For, in regard every good Action (even thoſe, which have all poſſible Advantages of preſent Pleaſure and Gain to recommend them) is yet owing, not to any Goodneſs in our Nature, but, in its true and laſt Reſult, is the Effect of a Divine Principle, actuating and aſſiſting us: How mighty muſt thoſe Influences be, which could diſpoſe and perſuade, againſt all the Inclinations of Nature, not eaſy to be withſtood, nor poſſible to be extirpated: and againſt all Temporal Intereſt too, which was not likely, and, in lawful Caſes, not reaſonable or fit, to be neglected? How much more than Human muſt that Reſignation of Spirit be, which ſubmitted to incomprehenſible Articles of Faith, and ungrateful Rules of Practice, upon the mere Authority of a Crucified Redeemer? Which would be governed by a Doctrine accounted Fooliſhneſs; and expect Rewards from a Maſter, whoſe ignominious Death was a Stumbling-block to his Contemporaries and Countrymen? To what Being, leſs than Omnipotent and Unchangeable, can we aſcribe that immoveable Firmneſs of Mind, which, in deſpite of all Temptations to the contrary, did not only live up to, but chearfully die for, ſuch a Religion as This? Which, after a perpetual Conflict with the Reluctances and Infirmities of Fleſh and Blood, eſteemed it an Honour and an Happineſs, to put off that very Fleſh and Blood, and give up all the Satisfactions of This, to the Promiſes of Another, a future and unſeen Life? But eſpecially, How amazing were thoſe Operations of the E-

ternal Comforter, which could inſpire the Suffering Saints of this Day ſo to undergo, and their Spectators ſo to behold, their moſt exquiſite Tortures and cruel Deaths; that, not only their Brethren ſhould be more confirmed, more ambitious of the Honour of the like Martyrdom: but that even Strangers, even Enemies, even their Guards and Executioners ſhould be thus gained over; and the Number of Converts at their Dying Hour ſhould ſometimes exceed thoſe, who had been made by a long Courſe of Preaching and Piety, throughout a moſt laborious and exemplary Life?

Theſe are unqueſtionable Facts; But Such, as are alſo unqueſtionably Superior to any Reaſonings or Powers merely Human. Nor can we ſuppoſe them effected by thoſe ordinary Aſſiſtances, to which we owe the doing or even thinking any thing that is good. Their Meaſures of Grace were plainly proportioned to the Tryals that called for them: And, as no Cauſe was ever worth enduring ſo much for; ſo none was ever, by the Supports afforded it, ſo manifeſtly proved to be of God. Nothing leſs than He, could have enabled Men of Senſe and Soberneſs, ſo eagerly to have embraced, ſo reſolutely to have perſevered in, ſuch an Inſtitution: And He would not have thought Chriſtianity worth ſuch miraculous Operations of his Spirit, had it not been his own Inſtitution. But,

2. *Secondly*, The Providences of God was likewiſe wonderful, in ordering Events ſo, that the Chriſtian Church ſhould be preſerved againſt all the Perſecutions and Attempts to overthrow it, and all the Errors and Corruptions, which muſt otherwiſe have depraved and undermined it. That the joint endeavours of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, (agreed in nothing but their Enmity to the Chriſtians) ſhould employ ſo much Malice and Subtlety, without ever attaining the intended Effect: That the Multitudes cut off by Their Cruelty, ſhould

ſhould be much more than ſupplied, by Succeſſors of equal Conſtancy and Zeal; and juſtify the Obſervation of a large Harveſt always ſpringing up, after every Seed-time of ſuch Blood: That, in the Ravage and Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, ſo nice a Diſcrimination ſhould be made; as reſcued the Body of Chriſtians from the Fate, which was indeed the Puniſhment too, of the unbelieving *Jews*: That afterwards, amidſt the many violent Convulſions which ſhook, and at laſt tore in pieces the *Roman* Empire, the Church ſhould ſtand firm upon her own Baſis, while all the World was tottering and breaking round about her: That, even when diſtreſſed and perſecuted within her ſelf, divided by Hereſies and Schiſms, clouded with Superſtition, degenerated into Idolatry, bewilder'd with Ignorance and a Darkneſs which might even be felt, and treated by Fellow-Chriſtians for refuſing Their Corruptions, with a Zeal, as barbarous as it is blind, as unrelenting as *Jewiſh* Rage or Heathen Tyranny; That She ſhould then emerge, and recover her Primitive Luſtre, after ſo long a Darkneſs, and ſuch powerful Endeavours to ſuppreſs her: Theſe are Events, to which the Viſion now before us is moſt probably believed to allude; Events, not to be expected in the ordinary Courſe of things. No, They are Fruits of being *ſealed* to a diſtinguiſhing Care and Protection; and ſuch experiments of the Divine Goodneſs and Truth, as will no longer ſuffer us to doubt, whether they be not Pledges of Chriſt being with his Faithful *alway, even unto the End of the World.*

Euſeb. *Hiſt.* III. 5.

But, while we are contemplating the Wonders of that Good Providence toward the *Remnant that eſcaped*; far be it from us to ſuppoſe it defective in Mercy toward Them, who fell a Sacrifice to the Fury of their Perſecutors. No: God had provided for thoſe gallant Men ſomething better than any Temporal Deliverance. A Place in Heaven, in Proportion higher

and more honourable, as their Graces on Earth were brighter, and their Sufferings more exquiſite. A Happineſs, which does infinitely more than compenſate all they did, or could endure for his ſake. And, the nearer Reſemblance they bore to the Indignities and Pains of their dying Redeemer heretofore, the nearer Approaches they now make to his Bliſs and Glory, before the Throne on high.

And This is the Conſtancy, Theſe the Crowns, of the Church Triumphant above; which the preſent Feſtival obliges us to commemorate, no leſs than the Continuance and Preſervation of a Church ſtill Militant below. In Both indeed we have an Intereſt and Part. For we all are Members of one and the ſame Body; differing at preſent in Place and Poſition only, till the Common Head ſhall think fit, in his own time, and by his own Methods, to bring us all together; and to reward the Tryals of them that are coming after, with Joys like Theirs, who are already gone before.

I conclude with ſuggeſting to my Reader ſome few Remarks, from the Love of God to his Saints: A due Improvement whereof would be the beſt and moſt Chriſtian Method of rendering to Him, and Them, the Honours intended to Both, by the Obſervation of this Feſtival.

1. *Firſt* then, the Integrity of theſe *Sealed*, and that Purity of Faith and Worſhip ſo carefully maintained by them, may be of ſignal Uſe to us, when attacked with violent Temptations to Sin. It will repreſent to us, by Their Example, the Poſſibility of reſiſting and overcoming all Attempts made upon our Virtue, by ſincere Reſolutions and Endeavours, back'd with that Grace, which alone can render them effectual. It will fill us with aſſured Expectation of, and Dependance upon, all ſuch neceſſary Strength and Aſſiſtances from God; provided we hold faſt by Him, and do not tamely deſert his Cauſe: which always is the Cauſe of Goodneſs

Goodneſs and Truth. It would guard us againſt the dangerous Seducements of Numbers, and Authority, and Examples: And not ſuffer us to love Piety and Virtue one whit the leſs, becauſe not valued by the Many, or not countenanced by the Great. Quite contrary, It would poſſeſs us with a terrible Apprehenſion of Vices, that have Credit and Vogue, and are grown faſhionable in the World; when we reflect, that theſe Great Champions of Faith and Holineſs attained the Honour and Privilege of God's *Seal*, by an inflexible, even when a perſecuted, Singularity in the True Religion. And this leads us naturally to a

2. *Second* Remark, reſulting from the eminent Deliverances they were *ſealed* to. Theſe ſhould convince us, however improbable diſcouraging Circumſtances may ſometimes happen to render it, that abiding ſtedfaſtly by our Duty is the beſt Security, with regard to our preſent Intereſts; It often proves ſo in Fact. Nay it always proves ſo, when God, for wiſe and better Purpoſes, does not ſee fit to ſuffer the contrary. For in ſuch Caſes the Juſtice, the Goodneſs, and the Honour of God are concerned, not to forſake thoſe Good Men in their Diſtreſs, who made that very Diſtreſs their Choice, and refuſed to accept any other Deliverance, in pure Love and Obedience to Him. Such an Aſſurance, that Providence is engaged on our Behalf, ſhould, even to private Perſons, be found a firmer Support, than any Human Appearances of Safety or Succeſs. But there is another Caſe, not ſubject to the ſame Reſerves. And that is the Protection of the Church in general; notwithſtanding all the Malice and Subtlety of its manifold Adverſaries and Inſulters. A very comfortable Reflection, to all that love the Lord *Jeſus* and his Goſpel. Such a one, in Truth, as it were heartily to be wiſhed, the Diſſoluteneſs of ſome, the Profaneneſs of others, the Induſtrious Propagation of Infidelity by a Third Sort, And, which gives Succeſs and

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Encouragement to all theſe, the general Lukewarmneſs and Indifference of Thoſe, who ought to oppoſe and ſuppreſs them, had not rendered almoſt the only Anchor of our Hope. For, never ſure could one have expected leſs, and yet never did Religion ſuffer more, from an uncontrolled Licentiouſneſs of ſtriking at the very Fundamentals of Chriſtianity, than in Our Age and Country. God in his Mercy touch the Conſciences of Thoſe, who take, or who encourage, or who connive at, ſuch Liberties. God diſpoſe us all, with a becoming Indignation to exerciſe the Powers we have; Or, if Theſe be too feeble, to contrive New and more effectual Methods, for the ſuppreſſing and reforming them; Leſt theſe crying Abominations be viſited upon our Nation, in Judgments ſuitable to the Horror of their Guilt. But I return, and obſerve,

3. *Thirdly*, That the Sufferings and Rewards of thoſe Saints, who died in the Cauſe of Religion, ought to be a moſt powerful Incitement to our Zeal and Perſeverance. They were Men of like Paſſions and Infirmities with Us, which takes off all Pretence of their Virtues being impracticable. The Promiſes of Divine Aſſiſtance are the ſame ſtill, and therefore the like Difficulties cannot be invincible. Their Examples indeed are left us, and our Memories are refreſhed with them, for this very Purpoſe, that we alſo ſhould *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us.* Their Courage and Conſtancy, their Reſignation and Charity, ſhould be copied by Us, as Occaſion requires. Their Sincerity and Devotion, the Purity of their Faith, the Innocency of their Converſation, their Fruitfulneſs in good Works, their Contempt of the World, and Heavenly-Mindedneſs, ſhould be Patterns always before our Eyes: becauſe theſe are Virtues, that may and ſhould be always in our Practice. In a Word, let us expreſs our Thanks to Almighty God for the Advantage of ſuch Shining Examples, and pay all due Reverence

rence to their Memory, by endeavouring to be like them. For, when all is done, the beſt and moſt acceptable Honour we can poſſibly do thoſe renowned Chriſtian Heroes, is that of forming our Conduct upon the Model of Their Graces, and aſpiring after the Weight and the Brightneſs of Their Crowns.

The GOSPEL.

St. Matt. v. 1.	PARAPHRASE.
1. *JEſus ſeeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain: and when he was ſet, his Diſciples came unto him.*	
2. *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, ſaying,*	
3. *Bleſſed are the * poor in ſpirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*	3. *They that have the true Spirit of Poverty. The Men of lowly and humble Hearts; for this will diſpoſe them to receive my Doctrine here, and that will lead them to the Glory of Heaven hereafter.
4. *Bleſſed are they that † mourn: for they ſhall be comforted.*	4. † They that ſorrow for their Sins, for this will work Repentance to Life and Salvation.
5. *Bleſſed are the * meek: for they ſhall inherit the earth.*	5. * They that are patient, and ſlow to Anger; for this Tranquility of Spirit will make their Lives comfortable, and give the trueſt Enjoyment of ſuch a State as God ſees fit for them, a State happy here, as well as hereafter.
6. *Bleſſed are they † which do hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs: for they ſhall be filled.*	6. † They that deſire to be truly good, and, in a juſt Senſe of their Infirmities and Defects, labour as hard to be ſo, as any, whoſe Neceſſities and Appetites of the Body are ſtrongeſt, do after the Supplies they feel the preſent want of. Such Deſires ſhall never be in vain.
7. *Bleſſed are the * merciful: for they ſhall obtain mercy.*	7. * They that pity, and to their power comfort and relieve, the needy and afflicted; that forgive and pray for thoſe who have injured or offended them; that are ready to do any kind and compaſſionate Office whatſoever: God will reward ſuch by the Return of His Mercy to Them.
8. *Bleſſed are the ‡ pure in heart: for they ſhall ſee God.*	8. ‡ They that preſerve their Minds free from the Defile-

Defilements of Luſt, and all ſorts of vicious Affections; God will communicate Knowledge and Grace to ſuch here, and admit them to the Beatifick Viſion of himſelf hereafter.

9. ✱ They who are orderly and peaceable themſelves, and endeavour to preſerve and promote Peace, both public and private, among others. This Diſpoſition renders them like God, and they ſhall have both the Name and Priviledges of his Children.

9. *Bleſſed are the ✱ peace-makers: for they ſhall be called the children of God.*

10. ‡ They, who ſuffer for the Profeſſion of the true Faith, and a ſtedfaſt Perſeverance in their Duty. dure upon ſuch accounts. Such ſhall have large amends made, for all they en-

10. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for ‡ righteouſneſs ſake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11, 12. And bleſſed are ye in particular, when ſuch ſhall be your Caſe for the ſake of me and my Goſpel. This Conſideration, that, as you are in Sufferings, ſo you ſhall be in the Rewards of a heavenly Kingdom, like to the Prophets and moſt celebrated Saints, ſhould make the Reproaches, and Malice, and cauſleſs Calumnies of your Perſecutors, Matter of great Joy to you.

11. *Bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake.*

12. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for ſo perſecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

COMMENT.

THE Scripture read for the Epiſtle, gave us occaſion to conſider the peculiar Favour of God toward thoſe faithful Servants of His, of whom this Feſtival is deſigned to tranſmit an honourable Remembrance to all Poſterity. There we ſaw the diſtinguiſhing Providence which guarded them, while Militant in This World, and ſomewhat of that Triumphant State, to which they are aſcended, in a Better. The Goſpel, in order to our more ready Attainment of Advantages, which we are by this time preſumed earneſtly to deſire, ſets before us thoſe good Diſpoſitions, which recommend the Saints to the Care and Protection, and exalt them to the Dwelling and Fruition of God. For the Privileges of Good Men we have the Beloved Diſciple's Authority; For their Happineſs and the Way to it both,

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we have the Word of the Maſter himſelf; Who at once pronounces ſuch Perſons *Bleſſed*, and inſtructs us how they come to be ſo.

The Virtues here mentioned, and the particular Bleſſedneſs apportioned to each, are a Subject too copious to be now entered upon. I ſhall therefore ſatisfy my ſelf, with making a few General Remarks; *Firſt* upon the Beatitudes themſelves; and *Then*, Upon thoſe Virtuous Actions and Good Diſpoſitions, which are preſcribed, as Means proper for attaining them.

1. Under the Former Head, I would beſpeak my Reader's Attention, in the *firſt* place, to the Fitneſs of that Method, taken by our Lord to inculcate his Doctrines, and to give them their due Weight with his Hearers. He is our Supreme Law-giver: and, as ſuch, had an indiſputable Right to deliver himſelf in an Imperial Style. Nor could we have found Reaſon to decline our Obedience; had his Pleaſure been ſignified to us, without any other Enforcement, than that of his own Authority. But he forbore to do ſo upon this Occaſion; and choſe a Courſe more ſuitable, to his own Character, to the Temper of that Religion he was about to eſtabliſh, and to the Natural Springs of Moral Actions.

The Character he appeared among Men in, was that of Love and Gentleneſs, of Meekneſs and Condeſcenſion. From all which the aſſerting his Dominion over Mankind would have been as averſe and foreign, as it is generally thought agreeable to the State and Greatneſs of Earthly Princes. They find it neceſſary to ſuffer no Diminution of their Power; and therefore They neglect no awful Appearances of it, that may ſecure the Submiſſion of their People. He was a King too, higher than the higheſt; but the Seaſon was not yet come for acting openly in that Capacity. And therefore This, like the other Glories of the Godhead, was to continue hidden from Human Eyes, under the Veil

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of a deſpiſed, and even leſs than common Man. His Life and Doctrine, his Sufferings and Death, his Reſurrection and Return to Heaven, his Spirit ſent from thence, and the infinite Works of Wonder done in his Name, were by degrees to reveal, and make way for the Belief of, his Majeſty and Glory. And therefore, in the Execution of his Prophetick Office, upon which he was now lately ſet out, it ſufficed, that he ſpoke with the Authority of a Teacher only. And conſidering the Predictions, that even in this reſpect concerned him; (ſuch as are referred to particularly at the xii^th^ of this Goſpel) he ſaw it more congru-
Ver. 18, 21. ous to abſtain from all Marks of a high Hand, at the Entrance into this Diſcourſe; and was content rather to inſtruct and perſuade, than to command.

2. This Behaviour did likewiſe beſt become the Temper of that Religion, which our Bleſſed Saviour was about to eſtabliſh. The Apoſtles frequently take notice of a wide Difference between the Law and the Goſpel; as in other Reſpects, ſo eſpecially upon account of the different Paſſions, which Each was deſigned to work upon. With the *Jews*, God dealt as with Servants; and the chief Principle of Obedience to that Inſtitution was Fear. But Chriſtians are treated as Children, and the Motive proper to their Duty is Love. Hence the Law was promulged with all the Pomp of Terror, and enforced with Curſes and Denunciations of Vengeance. But it was fit for the Goſpel to recommend it ſelf by a more generous and engaging Style, and to gain upon the Hearts of its Proſelytes by Promiſes of Bleſſedneſs and Rewards. The Objects chiefly in view of the Former, were the Divine Attributes of Juſtice and Power; whereby a refractory People might be frighted into good Manners. Thoſe ſet before the Latter, are infinite Mercy and Goodneſs; whereby a free and ingenuous People, obliged beyond

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all Poſſibility of Requital, might yet be ſhamed into ſuch Returns as they were capable of; and powerfully excited to imitate thoſe Excellencies, to which they were indebted for ſo glorious Hopes and Happineſs. And therefore their Invitations to Duty here are like their Duty it ſelf; in which there is nothing awful and ſervile, but all is the Effect of Filial Affection and Gratitude on the One Part; all Tenderneſs and Paternal Indulgence on the Other. A Duty, not impoſed for the Oſtentation of Authority, or the Exerciſe of an Arbitary Power; but for the Sake and Benefit of thoſe who pay it. And therefore ſo impoſed, as to lay the Foundation of Obedience, in a Senſe and Conviction of the Advantages attending it. Upon which account our Lord's Method here is admirable; becauſe

3. It is beſt accommodated to the Natural Springs of Human and Moral Actions. Happineſs is the natural Deſire of every Man; and what God hath given all a Deſire of, he hath certainly given all a Capacity of. This therefore is the common End and View; be the Means, uſed for the Attainment of it, never ſo different. The general Schemes of Life are laid, according to their ſuppoſed Tendency hither; and each Action is meant for a ſtep toward this common Home. It is not poſſible to be otherwiſe, with them that think at all; and therefore the Philoſophers, in their Treatiſes of Morality, conſtantly ſet out with an Enquiry after the Chief Good. Moſt reaſonably ſure. For, what can be more abſurd, than to lay down Rules of Living, before the Point be ſettled, what purpoſe Men live for? Or how ſhall a competent Judgment be made of the Fitneſs of any Means, by them, who as yet remain in Ignorance or Doubt, what End it is, which thoſe Means ought to ſerve? Thus far then our Lord hath conformed himſelf to the Method of all wiſe Moraliſts; but with very different Succeſs. For we ſhould be highly unjuſt both to His Wiſdom, and our own Profit;

Profit; did we overlook the Advantages of His, above any of Their Proceedings, in the following Reſpects particularly.

Firſt, As he had delivered Men out of thoſe Mazes of Uncertainty and Error, in which the Philoſophers had left them bewildered, concerning their chief Good. The Chief *Preſent* Good I mean; for the Collections of Nature, unaſſiſted by Revelation, never undertook poſitively to determine concerning any Other State; much leſs to lay that down, as a Maxim and Foundation, able to bear the Weight of whole Syſtems built upon it. Now in this very firſt Principle, the Variety of Opinions was as great, as that of Sects. And, what was like to become of Them at laſt, who, in their purſuit of Happineſs, followed Guides, ſo far from knowing the Way, that they were not yet agreed, about the Place whether they ſhould go? Thus far then our Bleſſed Saviour hath brought us forward; that we are plainly taught to abandon and deſpiſe thoſe miſtaken Seducers, who propoſed any thing ſordid and ſenſual as their End; and imagined the utmoſt attainable to here, to conſiſt, either in the Gratification, or the Stupefaction of our Paſſions. He plainly gives it on the ſide of thoſe more exalted Spirits, who rightly judged our preſent Happineſs to conſiſt, in Minds rightly diſpoſed, and in virtuous Actions ſuitable to ſuch Diſpoſitions.

2. But here again our Lord hath exceeded all that went before him, in correcting their Miſtakes, and leaving us right Notions of the beſt and moſt profitable Virtues. For even They, who placed Happineſs in Virtue before, never choſe ſuch Inſtances as theſe: Juſtice and Temperance, Prudence and Fortitude, and all that flatter'd our Natural Vanity by a ſeeming Greatneſs of Soul, were readily admitted into their Schemes. But Poverty of Spirit, and Meekneſs, Mercifulneſs and Peaceableneſs, were Paradoxes, till now unknown to

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the Enquirers after Happineſs. Leaſt of all could it have entered into any of their Heads, that Perſecution, upon any account whatſoever, renders a Man Bleſſed. Some indeed had the Hardineſs to aſſert, that it did not make a good Man miſerable. But Few in compariſon were content to go thus far; and None ever came up near our Lord's Aſſertion: None could, by reaſon of a moſt Material Defect in Theirs, which is now ſupplied by the Chriſtian Philoſophy, and by That only. For,

3. We have the Advantage, not of a Preſent only, but of a Future Bleſſedneſs alſo, revealed, and promiſed to the Virtues here enjoined. They, who taught, that Happineſs conſiſted in Virtue, made the neareſt Approach to Truth; but then this Notion obliged them to advance in Speculation Doctrines, inſtantly refuted by Practice and Experience. The Compoſition of Human Nature was not duly regarded; The unavoidable Frailties and Sufferings of Spirits, confined to ſuch Bodies as ours, ſcornfully overlooked; and conſequently, The Syſtems of the *Stoicks*, and Others, became impracticable and unſatisfactory; becauſe propounding Encouragements inſufficient for Human Nature, and ſuppoſing Men more abſtracted and refined, than they are, or can be, in the preſent State of things.

It is therefore the ineſtimable Privilege of Chriſtians, and we ought to acknowledge it with Thankfulneſs, that to Us, to Us alone, is given the Proſpect of a Compenſation, equal, far ſuperior indeed, to the Difficulties of our Duty. And Chriſt could never have been heard with the Succeſs theſe Doctrines have ſince found; had not a *Comfort* been promiſed to the *Mourners*, an *Inheritance* to the *Meek*, a *Sight of God* to the *Pure*, and a *Kingdom of Heaven* to the *Poor in Spirit* and *Perſecuted*, with which all other Maſters of Morality were altogether unacquainted.

As therefore the Inſtances and Degrees of Duty here preſcribed, are in great Meaſure New; ſo are the Motives to them in great Meaſure New alſo. The preſent Conveniencies, to which theſe Virtues have a Natural Tendency, are of great Weight, though not enough in All caſes. But, when Thoſe preſent Conveniencies are ſhewn to be but ſmall, in Compariſon of the infinite Reward hereafter, prepared for the Practice of them; The Choice of many Mortifications and Sufferings, which otherwiſe would hardly, if at all, have been juſtified, does then become not only reaſonable, but neceſſary. For when our Legiſlator ſtoops to our Deſires, meets our moſt eager Wiſhes, and ſhews us how to be, what every Man deſigns and longs to be: We can have no Excuſe for not complying. This is a condeſcending Appeal to Nature and Inclination; and renders all Diſobedience unaccountable and abſurd, by repreſenting our Duty and our Happineſs, as One and the Same thing. Till therefore we are able, (which we ſhall never be) to prove a Repugnancy between theſe two; let not our Lives reproach us with acting in Contradiction to Rule and Maxims, which in Speculation and Argument we cannot elude the Force of.

II. Concerning the Diſpoſitions preſcribed here for the Attainment of true Bleſſedneſs, I obſerve,

Firſt, That Moſt of them are what we call *Moral*, and many of them *Social*, Virtues. The Former will be a Warning to my Reader, what Men of Skill thoſe are, and how far endued with the Spirit of Chriſt, who, upon all Occaſions, diſparage Moral Virtues, as Mean and Legal, and beneath the Dignity of Spiritualized Chriſtians: Who blame us for not preaching Jeſus Chriſt and his Goſpel, when we preach what Jeſus Chriſt himſelf preached and practiſed; Who ſlanderouſly miſrepreſent this Eſtabliſhed Church, as derogating from Faith and Grace, becauſe her Miniſters urge

urge upon their People thoſe Good Works, which our Saviour ſays, in this very Chapter, ought ſo to *ſhine*, as to be *ſeen of Men*; which St. *James* demands, as the neceſſary Evidences of a true and living *Faith*; which St. *Paul* declares to be the *Fruits of the Spirit*; and which, if a Man *do not*, St. *John* pronounces him, to be *not of God, but of the Devil*. How dangerous is the Deluſion of thoſe poor Souls, who give themſelves up to the Guidance of ſuch Teachers? How ſafe and comfortable that Communion, whoſe Guides, in this regard, bear no Reproach, but what falls upon the Apoſtles, and their Bleſſed Maſter himſelf? For, ſo long as Their Epiſtles are allowed; we ſhall never be convicted for thus detracting from Grace, and Faith: And, ſo long as His Sermon on the Mount ſtands upon Record; This will vindicate our Endeavours to bring our Flocks to Heaven, by taking the way that Chriſt firſt led them in.

Ver. 16.

Ch. ii. 14, *&c.*

Galat. v. 22, Epheſ. v. 9.

1 Joh. iii. 10.

But I likewiſe obſerved, that Many of them are *Social* Virtues; Such as Mankind are benefited, and endeared to each other by. Of this kind are Humility, and Meekneſs, and Mercy, and Peaceableneſs. (And, if, as ſome have done, we ſhall interpret the Sixth *Verſe* of Juſtice in our Dealings, we may add Righteouſneſs alſo.) Now it is plain, God could not have expreſs'd a greater Friendlineſs for the Common Good of the World, and the Comforts of Society; than by firſt enjoining the Virtues that promote theſe excellent Ends; and then providing ſuch ample Compenſation in Another World, for Habits and Practices, which *Self* will be always oppoſing in This World. So plainly is He the beſt Chriſtian, who is the greateſt Benefactor to Order, and Peace, and Love. And ſo much more precious is an Active Charity, than an idle and unprofitable, though never ſo rapturous Contempla-

tion, in His Eyes, who prefers *Mercy before Sacrifice*, and who is ever doing Good to all his Creatures.

2. I obſerve of theſe Virtues, *Secondly*, That they are plain and eaſy Marks to judge of our Bleſſedneſs by. Many of them are ſuch, as will render themſelves conſpicuous to other People; but it is impoſſible for Any of them not to be diſcernible to a careful Examiner of his own Breaſt. And this is an Enquiry, which deſerves all our Care. For ſince all of us cannot but deſire to be happy; and ſince we muſt be ſo, or otherwiſe, according as we excel, or are defective, in theſe good Qualities; Who, that is ſo, would want the Satisfaction of knowing it? Who that is not, would not gladly be awakened by ſuch a Senſe of his Miſery, as might effectually engage his utmoſt Endeavours to become ſo? The Spirit and Temper of a Chriſtian, as here deſcribed, does indeed differ greatly from that of the World. And this Difference is another Argument for our Circumſpection: Without which Men are too apt to flatter their own Conſciences, becauſe like unto, or not worſe than, the Generality of them they live among. But, alas! this Fallacy, if indulged, will ruin all. For it is not Cuſtom, or common Opinion, but the Rules and Meaſures of the Goſpel, by which this moſt concerning Point muſt be determined. And let all the World ſay, or act, as they pleaſe; it is not more certain, that the Perſons thus qualified ſhall, than it is, that none but They (ordinarily ſpeaking) ſhall ever, partake of the Bleſſedneſs here promiſed.

3. *Laſtly*, When this Enquiry is made, We muſt not content ourſelves, with a partial Return to it; or imagine, that One or a Few of theſe Qualities will entitle us to Happineſs, if they be manifeſtly not accompanied by the Reſt. For, without entring into any Niceties, about the Number, the Order, or the Neceſſary Connexion, of the Virtues here enjoined; it is evident from the whole Tenure of Scripture, that God requires,

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in Every one of us, All the Diſpoſitions of Mind here mentioned; and looks, that Each ſhould exert its proper Acts, as fit Occaſions offer. The *Merciful* ſhall obtain no *Mercy* from God, if he be impure: Nor ſhall the *Pure ſee God*, if he be not *peaceable*. In ſhort, They are all bound upon us by the ſame Authority, and all muſt go to the Compoſition of a Perfect Chriſtian. Even the Preparation to undergo Perſecution for Righteouſneſs and Chriſt's ſake is neceſſary; though God never bring us into Circumſtances of reducing that Readineſs into Act. But Perſecution alone had never exalted the Martyrs and Confeſſors of this Day; had not their other Virtues, like ſo many Jewels, adorned and added Luſtre to that Crown they now wear in Heaven. The Brightneſs whereof we juſtly praiſe God for; and do beſt expreſs our thanks, by aſpiring after it, in the way they have gone before us. Which may He give us Grace to do, for his Bleſſed Son's ſake, the Captain of Their and Our Salvation, *Chriſt Jeſus*. To whom, *&c.*

The Fifth Day of November.

The Epistle.

Rom. xiii. 1.

The ſame with the iv^th *Sund.* after *Epiph.*

The Gospel.

St. Luke ix. 51.

Paraphrase.

51. *AND it came to paſs, when the time was come that he ſhould be received up, he ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem,*

51. Upon the near Approach of the Seaſon, which he knew was determined for his leaving the World: *Jeſus* began his Journey to the Place where he was to ſuffer, with all the Marks of undaunted Reſolution.

52. *And ſent meſſengers before his face: and they went, and entred into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him.*

53. *And they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem.*

54. *And when his diſciples James and John ſaw this, they ſaid, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did?*

55. *But he turned, and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.*

55. *You are not ſenſible how contrary ſo vindictive a Zeal is to the Temper of that Religion, which I am now forming you to;*

56. *For the Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives but to ſave them. And them went to another village.*

56. And indeed to my Example alſo; Whoſe Deſign of appearing in the World, is not to do Hurt to Men, but Good, even in their Worldly Intereſts and Capacities.

COMMENT.

OF the Separation between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*, in Matters of Religion, the Influence this had to obſtruct their Civil Intercourſe, And the extravagant Heights to which their Quarrels were carried, I have already had Occaſion to give my Reader ſome account. The Subject then before us, was a generous good Man, whoſe Behaviour to a *Jew* in Diſtreſs, proved him to have got above the common Prejudices of his Countrymen. Thoſe very Prejudices, whence that Deportment to our Bleſſed Lord proceeded, which are taken notice of in this Day's Goſpel, as provoking the Indignation of two Apoſtles to a high Degree. So high, that we find it rebuked here by their Maſter, as too fierce and revengeful in its Nature, too horrid and deſtructive in its Effects, to be allowed in Any, who call themſelves His Diſciples, and conſequently profeſs to make his Doctrine and Example the Rule and Standard, of their Temper, and their Actions.

Goſp. 13 Sund. aft. Trinity.

When we ſhall have conſidered, (1.) The Ground of that Offence taken here by theſe *Samaritans*; (2.) The Occaſion of the Apoſtle's Propoſal thereupon, and

(3.)

(3.) The Argument made uſe of by our Saviour for rejecting it: My Reader will not only ſee this Paſſage in its true Light; but very eaſily account for the making it a part of the Service, appointed for this Day of Joy and Thankſgiving.

1. As to the *Firſt* of Theſe; It does by no means appear, that the Inhabitants of *Samaria* were thus inhoſpitable, at all times, and to all *Jews:* Indeed it ſeems much more probable, that there was ſomething in the Seaſon, and ſomething in the Perſon too, which, now particularly, might diſpoſe them ſo to be.

The Evangeliſt in here relating, how our Lord left the Parts of *Galilee*, which had, for two Years and an half of his Miniſtry, been the chief Scene of his Miracles and Preaching. He is now removing into *Judea*, with an Intent to employ the ſix Months next before his Paſſion, in that Country, where thoſe greater Dangers awaited him, which, at the Paſſover following, ended in his Apprehenſion and Death. From the certain Proſpect hereof it is, that St. *Luke* is thought to have intimated his immoveable Reſolution and Conſtancy, by that Expreſſion of *ſtedfaſtly ſetting his Face to go to Jeruſalem.* Now this Journey is the ſame with that mentioned at the viiᵗʰ of St. *John*, when he followed his Relations privately to the *Feaſt of Tabernacles*. The Schiſmaticks in *Samaria* had Their ſolemn Feaſts likewiſe, though not exactly at the ſame times: And of That, inſtituted in Imitation of, but withal in Oppoſition to, this particular Feaſt of Tabernacles, the Scripture gives an account, as old as the firſt Breach made in the Reign of *Jeroboam*.

Ver. 51.

1 Kings xii. 32, 33.

The travelling therefore through their Country with a declared purpoſe of ſolemnizing this Feſtival at *Jeruſalem*, was looked upon as an Affront to their Way of Worſhip. For it argued our Lord's Judgment in this

Caſe to be, that *Jeruſalem* was the only Place, where theſe Feaſts could be regularly celebrated; And conſequently, that the keeping them in Mount *Gerizzim* and the Temple there, was a preſumptuous Innovation, directly contrary to the Will and Law of God.

All this is the more obſervable, becauſe our Lord did certainly paſs this Way at other times, and yet no notice is taken of the like Refuſals to entertain him. Nor do we find, that his Brethren, who at this time went upon the ſame Occaſion, were put to any Difficulties. Very likely they were not: But the different Character of the Perſons ſeem to have cauſed this different ſort of Treatment. The Opinions and Practices of common Men might be thought not worth Regard. But it would be of mighty Conſequence, for a Perſon ſo eminent as *Jeſus*, to declare againſt them. And, ſince his going to worſhip at *Jeruſalem* on this ſolemn Occaſion, would in all common Acceptation bear this Meaning: They contrived to prevent, as much as in them lay, the Influences it was feared that ſuppoſed Indignity might have by revenging it with another of not *receiving him*. An Expedient, very proper for the purpoſe they intended it ſhould ſerve: Becauſe ſuch Refuſal was a conſtructive Diſavowing of his Authority, and a plain Warning to all People, that, what Eſteem ſoever Others might have of this famed Man, They themſelves took him for no Prophet.

John iv.

Thus we may very well account for the *Samaritans* Churliſhneſs upon the preſent Occaſion; though it ſhould be allowed, as I ſee not why it may not, that our Lord himſelf might at another time, and that Others did at the ſame time, find better Quarter from them. Mean while theſe Circumſtances do not only explain the Reaſons of Their rough Behaviour, but help us toward a right Apprehenſion of the

II.

II. *Second* Thing in Order; The Propoſal made by thoſe Apoſtles, whoſe Zeal was provoked by it. To make this they they were encouraged by the Example of *Elias*, whoſe Action, here referred to, ſtood thus. He had foretold the ſpeedy Death of a wicked Prince, and ſtopped the Meſſengers ſent, in Contempt of the God of *Iſrael*, to conſult an Idol of the *Philiſtines* at *Ekron*. The King enraged ſends an Officer with fifty Men, who had no more Reverence for the true God, or his Meſſenger, than their great Maſter. They accoſt him indeed with the Title of *Man of God*, but that ſeems to be given him in Mockery and Scorn. For their Deſign was to apprehend and carry him to *Ahaziah*; that He, and his Mother *Jezebel*, might have the Pleaſure of Revenge, upon one, whoſe Predictions had ſo often been a Terror, and his Preſervations a Diſappointment, to that idolatrous and bloody Family. The Prophet, thus inſulted, begged of God to aſſert his own Honour, and by Fire from Heaven to conſume thoſe Aſſaulters, as an Evidence of his being in Reality that *Man of God*, which They in Deriſion had ſtyled him, His Prayer was heard accordingly, both then, and a ſecond time, upon an equal Number; who, not diſmayed with the Fate of the firſt Detachment, had the Hardineſs to follow with the ſame malicious purpoſe, and to accoſt *Elijah* in the ſame profane Drollery. This was the Event, upon which the two Apoſtles ground their Queſtion, *Lord, wilt thou that we command Fire to come down from Heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did?*

Ver. 54.

2 Kings i. 2, 8.

Ver. 9.

Ver. 10, 12.

Ver. 54.

A Motion, that ſpeaks the higheſt Veneration imaginable for their Maſter, and the moſt zealous Concern for his Honour. The Affront was, in both Caſes, thus far alike, that Each was an interpretative Denial of a Divine Authority, delegated to the Prophet, reſpectively

ctively concerned. The Safety of our Lord's Perſon was not attempted, as *Elijah*'s had been; but the Dignity of it was ſo far ſuperior, as, they conceived, might juſtly expoſe the Committers of any Inſolence againſt him, to a Puniſhment equally ſevere and miraculous. And of his Power, and the Readineſs of his Father to aſſert him againſt any Contemners of his Miracles and Doctrine, they make ſo little Doubt; that, without any Addreſs of his own, they promiſed themſelves the ſame Succeſs with *Elias*, provided they might have His leave to put up the ſame Prayer. For They concluded, that God, who was ſo careful to vindicate his Servant, would be much more jealous of the Honour of his Son: That Son, to whom they had ſo lately ſeen that very Servant pay Homage, at his Transfiguration in the Mount.

Ver. 30, 35.

Beſides this well-meant Zeal, countenanced by ſo great an Example; there may yet more be alledged in Excuſe for theſe Apoſtles. The *Samaritans* were confeſſedly Hereticks and Schiſmaticks; Their whole Worſhip was a manifeſt and moſt preſumptuous Violation of the Divine Law: This Rejection of Chriſt was the utmoſt Mark of their Deteſtation of that Law, and of him for obſerving it: The Deſtruction, which they were ſuppoſed to deſerve upon theſe Accounts, *James* and *John*, though heated with Indignation, did not undertake to be Inſtruments and Actors in; but only propoſed to beg of God, that He would inflict it in ſuch an extraordinary way, as might evidence his Diſpleaſure: This Requeſt to God they did not preſume to make, till they had firſt conſulted our Lord, concerning the Fitneſs of it: And, upon his diſliking it, they immediately acquieſced, and patiently took the Rebuke of their Ignorance and raſh Reſentment.

But now, if inſtead of all or any of theſe Precautions, bold Men ſhall take into their own Hands that Work of Vengeance, which God in Scripture claims as his

his own Peculiar; If they ſhall attempt the Deſtruction of ſuch, as they cauſeleſly brand with the odious Imputations of Schiſm and Hereſy: If, inſtead of waiting for a Commiſſion from Chriſt, they ſhall proceed in direct Oppoſition to This and Other Declarations of his Will, in Matters of the like nature: If, *Laſtly*, for the effecting their barbarous Deſigns, they ſhall enter into Meaſures of Treachery and Cruelty: Meaſures, not only unknown to Chriſtianity, but breaking in upon all Civil Obligations, and a Contradiction to all common Humanity: How far the Condition of ſuch Men, would be diſtant from that of the Apoſtles now before us, I leave the impartial Reader to conſider and judge.

One can hardly ſuppoſe indeed the Power of Prejudice itſelf to be ſo great, as to miſlead Men in the Latter of theſe Caſes; who obſerve, that the Former, (notwithſtanding ſo many Circumſtances, which extenuate, and make it almoſt nothing, when compared with the Other) is yet diſallowed and reproved, in the Manner, which comes next to be repreſented in my

III. *Third* Particular. For this conſiſts of the Argument choſen by our Saviour, for rejecting the Apoſtle's Propoſal. *He turned, and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.* This Argument quite takes off the only Colour urged by the Apoſtles. For it imports, that *Elias*, great and eminent though he were in his Day, is not yet a Pattern to be followed throughout, in the *Days of the Son of Man.* He lived under a Diſpenſation of Severity and Terror; to which the avenging outrageous Injuries, done to God's Miniſters, by very dreadful and immediate Judgments was agreeable enough. But the Goſpel is a Diſpenſation of Compaſſion and Love: An Inſtitution, Good to Mankind, in all their Intereſts and Capacities. And in regard Means muſt be conſtantly ſuited to their Ends; nothing could be-

more

more incongruous and abſurd, than to promote this by Methods of Rigour and Revenge.

What *Elias* did, the Event demonſtrated to proceed from an extraordinary Impulſe of God's Spirit; What theſe Diſciples would have done, the Diſallowance of it as evidently proves to have come from a private Inſtinct of their Own; The Operations of the Spirit tend now to Beneficence and Mercy, in uncommon Emergencies that require it: God, it is true, hath not been wanting to exert his vindictive Power. He aſſerted the Authority of St. *Peter*, by the ſudden Death of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; and of St. *Paul*, by ſmiting *Elymas* with Blindneſs. But theſe are very rare and exempt Caſes. They muſt not be drawn into Conſequence and Practice; becauſe it is ſcarce poſſible, either that the like Occaſions ſhould happen; or that the ſame Aſſurances of acting in them by the Dictates of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhould be ever obtained again. The Apoſtles therefore, and the Governors of the Church, in the ordinary Courſe of their Miniſtry, and private Chriſtians in their Demeanour towards each other, are to follow ſuch ſtanding Rules; as He, who beſt underſtood the Temper and Deſign, the Intereſt and the Honour of his own Religion, hath ſet a Copy of in his Behaviour, and left Directions for in his Doctrine. And what Meaſures his Example and his Precepts lead to, a very little Reflection upon Each may ſuffice to inſtruct us.

Acts v. Acts xiii.

1. His Example was in this kind the moſt perfect, that had been, or ever will be, ſet to the World. Nothing appeared in his Temper and whole Converſation, but Gentleneſs and Sweetneſs. His Inſtructions were delivered in the ſofteſt and ſimpleſt manner: The Advantages of receiving, and the Sin and Danger of rejecting them, were propoſed fairly and calmly; without any Force, except that of Argument: The Reſult of

of all was an Appeal to the Reaſon and the Conſciences of Men; ſuch as left a Liberty of Choice, and did not labour to compel, but to perſuade and win them over to their own Good. When any unacceptable things were neceſſary to be ſpoken; his Care to avoid all Exaſperations was evident, in the frequent Recourſe had to Parables; A Method the leaſt offenſive, and that which threw off all the invidious part of Application upon the Hearers own private Reflections. When any Severity of Reproof, or Sharpneſs of Language, mingled with his Diſcourſes; theſe were the Effect of Charity and great Tenderneſs. Partly for awakening the Guilty themſelves into a Senſe of thoſe Provocations, which extorted them: And partly for undeceiving poor well meaning People, by a Diſcovery of thoſe Prejudices and Corruptions, to which their too popular Guides kept them in Bondage. The numberleſs Injuries and Affronts, with which he was followed, met uſually with no other return, than removing (as here) to another place; withdrawing out of the way of his Enemies: reſtraining their Fury from the Wickedneſs it deſigned, while he conſulted the Safety of his own Perſon: Nay his laſt Indignities, and Torments and Death gave proof of a Meekneſs invincible, by praying and dying for his Enemies and Perſecutors. And, which brings all home to the Point we are upon, He was injured, affronted, hated, perſecuted, ſcourged, and crucified, upon no other Account, than that of thinking and teaching in Matters of Religion, differently from thoſe outragious Zealots, who dealt ſo inhumanly with him.

2. Such were the Shining Beauties of his Life. And for his Doctrines; We have lately obſerved, that the Virtues, which thus adorned his own Practice, he began his Divine Sermon on the Mount with recommending, as a Rule and Model for all his Diſciples, to form Their Character

Goſp. on All Saints.

Character upon. The whole Body indeed of the Chriſtian Precepts is calculated for Univerſal Benevolence, and Mutual Compaſſion for Infirmities, Miſunderſtandings, and Miſdemeanors. It is the Glory and Excellence of this Religion to advance Peace and Love; to tye the Bands of Friendſhip cloſer and ſtronger; and to advance every Diſpoſition, that can render Society more eaſy and delightful, more uſeful and engaging. It enlarges our Kindneſs to *Thoſe that are Without*; corrects our Diſdain, and forbids all odious Diſtinctions, that pretend to countenance our Uncharitableneſs or Pride toward Any, who partake of the ſame Human Nature. It knits together *Thoſe that are Within*, by Titles and Relations nearer and more endearing, than any, that either Civil or Sacred Inſtitutions had united Men in before. All which deſerve to be the more conſidered; becauſe it is the Unhappineſs of theſe later Ages, that the Heats and Animoſities, which diſturb Our Parts of the World, are kindled and kept up, Not between them that own Chriſt, and them that deny him; but between thoſe that are agreed in *naming the Name of Chriſt*, and yet, becauſe they differ in the manner of doing it, will needs be rending, and tearing, and devouring one another. They all profeſs to know and ſerve their Lord: But if Some refuſe to reſolve that Knowledge into the Dictates of an Infallible Chair; Others curſe and condemn them, and refuſe to allow them not only the Privileges of Chriſtians, but even that common Faith and fair Treatment which belongs to them as Men.

What a palpable Contradiction are theſe Violent Proceedings to thoſe Rules, which command all Followers of the Meek and Holy *Jeſus*, to *be kindly affectioned one towards another*, to *love as Brethren*, to *be pitiful*, to *be courteous*, to *lay aſide all Bitterneſs and Wrath*, to *ſhew forth out of a good Converſation*

Rom. xii. 10.
1 Pet. iii. 8.
Epheſ. iv. 31.
Jam. iii. 13.

verſation their Works with Meekneſs of Wiſdom; to *bear the Infirmities of the Weak*; not to *fight* or *ſtrive*, but *to be gentle towards all Men, patient, in Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves?* How different a Conduct is this, from that enjoined by Chriſt to his Apoſtles, that when *one City perſecuted* them, they *ſhould flee to another?* Who, if their Doctrines were not entertained, had no more to do, than to warn the Refractory of their Danger, and quietly to withdraw? How much otherwiſe did he Himſelf act in the Caſe now before us? Who retired, as a Romiſh Expoſitor honeſtly remarks, *to teach the Propagators of his Goſpel, how they ought to behave themſelves, when any where repulſed; namely, to take it patiently, and go off ſomewhither elſe*; and, *treading in their Lord's ſteps, to keep their Temper, as becometh Saints.*

Rom. xv. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

Matth. x. 23. —xi. 15. Luke x. 8--11.

Lucas Brugenſ.

Should the Modern Sons of Zeal have imitated this Pattern; they had ſaved themſelves the Reproach of this Day's Diſappointment, and their innocent Brethren the juſt Apprehenſions, what may be the Conſequences of a reſtleſs Principle, which could ſubmit to a Deſign, blacker than can be parallelled in Story, and, which watches all Opportunities to annoy, embroil, and overturn a truly Primitive Church. Nay, they had prevented a great deal of Reproach, which ignorant and unwary People will naturally caſt upon Chriſtianity itſelf. For how vain muſt Such think the Glory it aſſumes, of making the *Wolf and of the Lamb lie down together*; when they ſee Thoſe, who call themſelves the only *Lambs* of Chriſt, in a pretended Zeal for this very Religion, acting the part of treacherous and ravenous *Wolves?*

God in his Mercy touch the Hearts of All who profeſs his Goſpel, with a due Senſe and Deteſtation of ſuch

ſuch abſurd Wickedneſs; that his Name and Truth may no longer be blaſphemed by the Enemies of his Son; that there may no longer be envying or ſtrife, *hurting or deſtroying, in all his holy Mountain*; but, that the Spirit of Knowledge and Meekneſs and Love may reign there, and fill the whole Earth with the Fruits of Righteouſneſs and Peace.

Iſaiah xi. 9.

But if ſo great a Bleſſing cannot be yet obtained; May the ſame good God ſtill prove himſelf our God, by preſerving this Church and Nation, both from partaking in the Sins, and ſuffering by the Attempts of our, hitherto implacable, Adverſaries. And may We never either forget, or neglect to improve as we ought, the ſignal Mercies of this auſpicious Day. *For which, to our watchful and moſt mighty Protector, be aſcribed by us, and our Poſterity, Honour and Praiſe, Adoration and Thankſgiving, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

The Thirtieth Day of January.

King CHARLES's *Martyrdom.*

The EPISTLE.

See Epiſt. for II. and III. Sundays after *Eaſter.*

St. *Peter* ii. 13—22.

The GOSPEL.

St. Matth. xxi. 33.

See the Comment.

33. *THere was a certain houſholder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-preſs in it, and built a tower, and let it out to huſbandmen, and went into a far country.*

34.

34. *And when the time of the fruit drew near, he ſent his ſervants to the huſbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.*

35. *And the huſbandmen took his ſervants, and beat one, and killed another, and ſtoned another.*

36. *Again, he ſent other ſervants, more than the firſt: and they did unto them likewiſe.*

37. *But laſt of all, he ſent unto them his ſon, ſaying, They will reverence my ſon.*

38. *But when the huſbandmen ſaw the ſon, they ſaid among themſelves, This is the Heir; come, let us kill him, and let us ſeize on his inheritance.*

39. *And they caught him, and caſt him out of the vineyard, and ſlew him.*

40. *When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto thoſe huſbandmen?*

41. *They ſay unto him, He will miſerably deſtroy thoſe wicked men, and will let out his Vineyard unto other huſbandmen, which ſhall render him the fruits in their ſeaſons.*

COMMENT.

THE Uſe, proper to be now made of this Parable, is, *Firſt*, To explain it ſo far as ſhall be neceſſary; *Secondly*, To obſerve the Ends our Lord deſigned it for; And *Laſtly*, To ſhew, how pertinent a Subject it makes for our Meditations upon this Day.

1. I know not, whether there be in Scripture any Allegory more frequent, or more ſignificant, than that, which reſembles the Church of God to a Vine, and a Vineyard. Some Reaſons, which might prefer This before other Compariſons, have been touched upon already. But for our Saviour's Uſe of it here, we need look no farther, than this One; that the Meaning of ſuch Alluſions muſt needs be obvious and eaſy, to Perſons daily converſant in the Law and the Prophets. Accordingly, we find the Application ready made; and that no doubt remained among the Audience; either concerning the matter of the Reproofs couched in this Parable, or the Perſons to whom thoſe Reproofs did of right belong. *Goſp. St. Mark's Day.*

They preſently apprehended the *Vineyard* here to ſignify the Jewiſh People, conſidered in their Spiritual Capacity: The *Houſholder*, who *planted* and *hedged it about*, to be Almighty God: Who had bleſſed them with the Communications of his Revealed Will, made this Diſtinction between Them and the World in common, and, by Laws and Ordinances peculiar to themſelves, had incloſed them as his own Poſſeſſion. The *Wine-preſs*, and *Tower*, and other ſuitable Conveniences, were no leſs natural Repreſentations of all the Advantages and Opportunities, afforded them for ſerving him acceptably: And the *letting this Vineyard out to Huſbandmen*, while *himſelf went into a far Country*, imported the Care of them committed to their Governors and Inſtructors; By the ordinary Courſe of whoſe Miniſtry they were to be taught and kept in their Duty; without expecting ſuch extraordinary Marks of God's conſtant Preſence and immediate Direction, as appeared at his firſt forming them into a Church. It was therefore at the hands of theſe Rulers and Teachers, that the Houſholder expected the Fruits; becauſe the Barrenneſs of a Soil ſo kindly, and ſo well prepared, could proceed only from their negligence to cultivate it; and They in the very nature of their Poſt, were accountable for the Product to the Lord of the Fee. Mean while, theſe Fruits are no other than Returns of Duty, proportioned to the Advantages of knowing and performing it: An awful Regard to their Laws; A Readineſs to repent of their Faults and to rectify their Errors, when warned of them; And a ſincere Deſire to improve under any more perfect Diſcoveries of the Divine Will, which ſhould hereafter be made to them.

Ver. 33.

Accordingly, at the ſeaſon proper to expect they ſhould be anſwered, this Houſholder ſent Servants to make his Demands. The Virtues and good Effects of ſo gracious a Diſpenſation not

Ver. 34.

not appearing; God commiſſioned his Prophets to reprove, exhort, and quicken, by denunciations of Vengeance and promiſes of Reward; as Men ſhould reject or be reformed by their Meſſages. Meſſages, which principally concerned the Huſbandmen; Becauſe through Their Careleſneſs or Corruption it was, that *this Vineyard brought forth wild Grapes: i. e.* that the People degenerated into Idolatry and Superſtition, neglected the Subſtance and took up with the Form of Godlineſs, let go the Law of their God, and held faſt the Tradition of their Elders.

Theſe Servants got little or nothing for their Maſter; and ſuffered ſeverely themſelves for ſo unacceptable a Meſſage. *Ver.* 35, 36.

The Prophets, from time to time, (for that's the meaning of the Errands ſo often repeated) inſtead of making any good Impreſſion, were the object of theſe Rulers Scorn and Hatred. *Comp.* Mark xii. 7. *with* Luke xxi. 10, 11. The Vices of the People were now grown profitable; The more Theſe were corrupted, the more they were at the Devotion of their Maſters: And therefore theſe Great Men ſoon rid their hands of the Prophets, as often as any of them attempted to preach a return to God, and to the weighter matters of the Law; Becauſe this was, by conſequence, a breaking the Yoke of Bondage to thoſe who debauched the Manners, purely to get an abſolute Dominion over the Fortunes and Perſons of their Charge.

After ſeveral ineffectual Diſpatches by Meſſengers of meaner Quality, the Lord of the Vineyard reſolves upon ſending his Son. This he does from a preſumption, that His Character would not fail to command Reſpect, and another ſort of Reception. Hereby we underſtand God's Decree to ſend his Bleſſed Son, the Meſſias; but with this Caution, that thoſe Words, *They will reverence my Son*, (which, in *Ver.* 37.

their literal Senſe, comport very well with the *Houſeholder*) be not, with regard to Almighty God, wreſted to a Senſe, implying any Ignorance of the Event, which this Miſſion afterwards had. He knew and clearly foreſaw every Circumſtance of that contumelious Treatment, which his Son found from theſe Huſbandmen: He ſent him to be crucified and ſlain by their wicked Hands: But by this Expreſſion (neceſſary to preſerve the Decorum of a Parable, but not to be too nicely inſiſted on in the Application) God condeſcends to be repreſented as One of Us; who uſually ſay thoſe things will be done, which there is all the Reaſon in the World to expect ſhould be done. Or, as St. *Chryſoſtom*, He giveth this Intimation, that, notwithſtanding any Preſcience of His, the Actions of Men, which bring to paſs Events before-determined by his Providence, are the Actor's own Choice; and that all the Guilt or Virtue of them will be placed to Their Account.

In Either of theſe Senſes, that Paſſage will conſiſt with the deportment of thoſe Huſbandmen, who immediately conſpired the Murder of the *Heir*, for that very Reaſon, becauſe he was the Heir; and that they might thenceforth *ſeize on his Inheritance*. The Prieſts and Rulers were ſenſible, that none could ever come to them with clearer Marks of a Divine Authority, none more endanger their Power and Popularity, than the Meſſiah, Jeſus Chriſt. And therefore, after having long laboured in vain to fix upon him the Reproaches of Blaſphemer, Impoſtor, and Mover of Sedition; to diſcredit him, ſometimes with one, ſometimes with another ſet of Men: They found means to have that Innocent and Excellent Perſon put to a cruel and ignominious Death; And triumph'd in that Expedient, as an Effectual Security, for the future Exerciſe of their Avarice and Ambition, without Rebuke or Controul.

Ver. 38.

Ver. 39.

But

But ſee the Conſequence. The Ingratitude and Inſolence of the Huſbandmen here repreſented, conſtrained the Hearers to acknowledge it a moſt probable and fit thing, for the Lord of the Vineyard to diſpoſſeſs and deſtroy theſe Wretches; and to provide himſelf with Other Huſbandmen, more true to their Truſt, and more ſenſible of the Honour of having it repoſed in them. This Image *(that is)* of what the *Jewiſh* Rulers had done, and were about to do, manifeſts the Juſtice of that Puniſhment which they thus drew upon themſelves and their whole Nation; when God turned thoſe very Meaſures to their Deſtruction, upon which they chiefly depended for their Safety, and the Eſtabliſhment of their uſurped Dominion over the Peoples Conſciences. For he utterly deſtroyed their City, diſpers'd their People, and carried his Goſpel to the *Gentiles*, whoſe Spirit and Behaviour proved them more worthy Objects of this unexpected Mercy. *Ver.* 40, 41.

II. After ſo large an Explanation of the Parable it ſelf, there will need the leſs to be added upon my *Second* Head. For by this time I take it to be very Evident, that our Bleſſed Lord's Deſign in it was Twofold. *Firſt*, To detect the Wickedneſs of the Perſons concern'd in it: And, *Secondly*, To foretel the Puniſhment of that Wickedneſs. A little Reflection upon Each of theſe Particulars is neceſſary.

1. The Wickedneſs here mentioned, is Withholding the Fruits, and abuſing the Meſſengers ſent to demand them: That is, Hindring, or not promoting as they ought, Obedience to God and his Laws; and perſecuting and murdering the Prophets and Chriſt himſelf; who came to purge out the Leaven of their Corruptions, and to teach them the way of Life more perfectly. But This is an Accuſation too general, to give us a ſufficient Character of Theſe Men; and therefore it may be proper, from ſome Other Paſſages, to take a

more distinct View, *First*, Of the vicious Dispositions which led them to, and confirmed them in this Crime; And *afterwards*, Of the Steps, by which they proceeded in it.

Now we find our Lord, in the *Twenty Third* of this Gospel, and some other Passages in the Evangelists, charging them home with Covetousness and Extortion, Pride and Envy, Insatiable Thirst of Dominion, and insupportable Tyranny in the Use of it. But above all, of the vilest and most impudent Hypocrisy; by which all their Vices pass'd upon the People, and Religion was made the Tool of their most villanious Designs. Hence they are compared to *whited Sepulchres*; said to *make clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, but within to be full of Extortion and Excess*: They *enlarged their Fringes and Phylacteries*, for the sake of gaining more Respect at *Feasts, the chief Seats in the Synagogues, and Greetings in the Markets*: And the length of their Prayers was a *Pretence, for devouring Widows Houses* with a better Grace. When by this Mask of Sanctity they had established their Authority with the Common People, they *bound upon them heavy Burdens, which themselves would not move with one of their Fingers*; they *kept from them the Key of Knowledge*, and *shut up the Kingdom of Heaven*; for they *neither went in* themselves, nor would *they suffer them that were entring to go in*. To be short, *they compassed Sea and Land to make* though but *one Proselyte*; and the Result of all this wicked Industry was the poisoning him with their own bitter Zeal, and *rendring him twofold more the Child of Hell, than themselves*; that is, more implacably averse to the Truth, and to all who professed Obedience to Our Blessed Master.

Cb. xxiii. 27. Ver. 25. Ver. 5. Ver. 6, 7. Ver. 14. Ver. 13. Ver. 15.

Thus

Thus did thoſe treacherous Huſbandmen, inſtead of rendring, obſtruct the Fruits, which the Vineyard would otherwiſe have yielded. And for a better Security to their own Varniſh of Holineſs, they blackned the Meſſengers of their great Maſter, and made his Son in particular a Monſter of Impiety, in the Eyes of all, who were content to ſee through Glaſſes of Their holding. They traduced his whole Behaviour; laid Snares for him in common Converſation; The Reſpects at any time ſhewed him, were made to ſerve ſome treacherous Deſign; If aſked to eat with them, the Uſe of that Civility was to *catch ſomething out of his Mouth, that they might accuſe him*; If complimented with a *Maſter, we know, that thou art true, and teacheſt the way of God in Truth*; it is by Them, who make this unuſual Addreſs, in Purſuance of a Conſultation *how they might entangle him in his Talk*. At other times they load his Doctrine with Impoſture and Blaſphemy; his Actions and Diſcourſe with Frenzy and Poſſeſſion; and impute his Miracles to a Colluſion with the Devil. In all which Inſtances of Calumny and Malice, their Succeſs with the Populace was ſuch, that, notwithſtanding the ſenſible daily Demonſtrations of his Power and Goodneſs, notwithſtanding the devout and unanimous Acknowledgments of his Miſſion and Meſſiahſhip, (recorded in this very Chapter, and always freely made, when from under the Influence of their imperious Guides) this moſt innocent, moſt beneficent Perſon, purely for being the Heir (the rightful Demander of the Fruits, and moſt dangerous Obſtructor of theſe uſurped and innovating Powers) was, by the Envy of the Rulers, and the implicite Concurrence of the ſtupid Multitudes, treated with the utmoſt Indignity; arraigned and tried as a Male-

Luke xi. 54.

Matth. xxii. 15, 16.

Matth. xxi. 8, 9.

Malefactor, sentenced to Death, as a Seducer, Seditious Person, and Traitor; and publickly executed as a common Slave. So manifestly did the Event prove at last, that, what Popular and Specious Pretences soever their Wickedness might cover it self with, yet the true Fruits of the Vineyard were no part of their Care. But the Thought and Intent, that lay always at their Hearts, was, *Come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his Inheritance.*

2. The other part of our Lord's Design in this Parable was, I said, to foretel the Punishment of the Persons concern'd in it. Now That hath been already observed to consist, in dispersing the *Jewish* People, breaking their Polity, and carrying the Gospel to the *Gentiles.* Concerning which I only make these Two Remarks, and leave the rest to my Reader's Application.

1. The *First* is, That the very Calamity, which the killing of our Blessed Saviour was urged as a necessary Expedient against, became the Consequence of this wicked Murder. *If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come, and take away our Place and Nation:* This was the Popular Argument for infusing Fears and Jealousies. And the Inference from These, how groundless soever the entertaining of them were, naturally follows, *It is expedient for us, that one Man should die for the People, and that the whole Nation perish not.* But God, whose over-ruling Providence frequently traps the *ungodly in the work of his own hands*, ordain'd that very Coming of the *Romans*, in revenge for the innocent Blood of his Son. So wretchedly is Human Policy mistaken, when contriving to secure past Wickednesses by subsequent and Greater: And so certainly is the Ruin of any Person or Faction portended;

John xi. 48.

Ver. 50.

tended; when abandoned to ſuch outrageous Villanies, as, by *filling up the Meaſure of their Iniquities*, preclude them at once from the Pardon of God, and from the Countenance and Compaſſion of every ſober and good Man.

2. My other Remark concerns the Extent of that Puniſhment. Which, far from being confined to the immediate Actors or Contrivers of this Murder of God's Anointed, involved the whole Nation of that Age, and hath ſhed its Venom upon the Poſterity of the *Jews*, in all ſucceeding Generations, to this very Day. So diffuſive is the Miſchief of *Evil*, when done upon a Pretence that *Good may come*. And ſo cautious ought the Men of honeſt Meaning to be, how they give in to the Meaſures of popular and intriguing Perſons; who, when they cry loudeſt for the Publick and the People, have frequently confounded Both, by irregular Methods, meant only to promote a Private or a Party-Advantage.

I forbear any tedious Enlargement on the Occaſion of this Solemnity, becauſe the Parallel lies ſo fair in view, that no impartial Reader can miſs it.

The Diſpoſitions and Deſigns of our late Demagogues prove the Race of the *Jewiſh Phariſees* far from being extinct with their Perſons. The Meaſures by them taken, and the Horror of this Day's Blood, make it vain, to ſay, *if they had lived in the Days of* thoſe *their Fathers*, that *they would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets.*

The juſt Fate of our Regicides, and the diſmal Confuſions conſequent to ſo black a Crime, ſhould be an effectual Warning, how vain an Attempt it is, to reform ſuppoſed, or real Abuſes in Government, by Treaſon or Rebellion.

And the Extent of the Puniſhment, predicted in this Parable, juſtifies our lamenting the Sin of ſo guilty a Day; and our deprecating the Judgment of him, *by whom*

whom Kings rule, at this, or a yet much greater Diſtance, from a Fact, which, we have reaſon to fear, may have provoked a long Succeſſion of them. And if we act ſincerely in theſe Humiliations; we ſhall be very jealous of hearkening to the Inſinuations of thoſe pretended Patriots; Who, by extenuating this horrid Act, and vindicating the Steps that led to it, warn us to look upon them, as dangerous Subverters of Government in general, and Enemies by Principle (if they be Men of any Principle) to the preſent happy Conſtitution of this particular Church and State.

The Twenty Ninth of May.

The EPISTLE.

1 *St.* Pet. ii. 11, 17.

The ſame with the iii. *Sund.* after *Eaſter.*

The GOSPEL.

St. Matth. xxii. 16, 22.

See the Comment.

16. AND they ſent out unto him their diſciples with the Herodians, ſaying, Maſter, we know that thou art true, and teacheſt the way of God in truth, neither careſt thou for any man: for thou regardeſt not the perſon of men.

17. Tell us therefore, What thinkeſt thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæſar, or not?

18. But Jeſus perceived their Wickedneſs, and ſaid, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

19. Shew me the Tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20. And he ſaith unto them, Whoſe is this image and ſuperſcription?

21. They ſay unto him, Cæſar's. Then ſaith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæſar, the things which are Cæſar's; and unto God, the things that are God's.

22. When they had heard theſe words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

COMMENT.

Comment.

THE Scripture laſt inſiſted on is ſaid, in the Chapter next before, to have provoked the *Phariſees* ſo highly, that they deliberated upon Methods, proper for deſtroying ſo bold a Rebuker as *Jeſus*. The Reverence and Eſteem juſtly paid him by the People, rendred open Violence an impracticable and too dangerous Expedient.

What therefore they durſt not attempt by Force, they hope to compaſs by Subtlety. And, conſidering how free he was in delivering his Opinion, they lay a Snare to *entangle him in his Talk*; (*Ver.* 15.) and had ordered the Matter ſo, as to fancy themſelves ſure of him. For the more perfect underſtanding of which wicked Project, and of the Wiſdom of our Lord's evading it; it may not be amiſs to trace this Matter a little higher, and obſerve the whole Intrigue. Now this will beſt appear by conſidering (1.) The Quality of the Perſons ſent to attack him; (2.) The State of the Queſtion they propounded; And (3.) The Occaſion of their pretended Doubt in it.

1. The Perſons, who were to undertake our Saviour upon this Occaſion, are ſaid to be Diſciples of the *Phariſees* with the *Herodians*. By the Latter of which are commonly, and moſt probably, ſuppoſed to be meant Partiſans and Favourers of *Herod*. But, what their Principle was, as to the Matter now in hand, it is not ſo generally agreed. Some think them Enemies to the *Roman* Government; and, that they only watched a favourable Opportunity of making *Herod*'s Family abſolute. Others think them entirely in the Intereſt of the Emperor, as *Herod* himſelf now was. For, having by his Indulgence been advanced to the Regal State, he acted for and under Him, in collecting the Cuſtoms

Cuſtoms and publick Duties. This latter Opinion, as it is more commonly entertained, ſo it is more agreeable to the *Phariſees* Deſign. For, had the Perſons ſent here been all of One Sentiment, Chriſt might very eaſily have ſatisfied them all. But the Addreſs and Cunning of the *Phariſees* ſeems to have lain chiefly in the Management of their Meſſengers. For, by ſending Men of different Judgments, they made it impoſſible to content both Parties: And, what Reſolution ſoever he gave, the One, or the Other Sort, would not fail to take Advantage of his Anſwer.

2. How reaſonable it was for them to expect this, will preſently appear from a State of the Queſtion truly taken; which ſeems to be thus. The Government of the *Jews* had fallen into the Hands of the *Macabees*, and, in Succeſſion, to one of them named *Alexander*; He left two Sons, *Hyrcanus* and *Ariſtobulus*. The Younger of theſe made War upon the Elder, and aſſumed to himſelf the Kingdom. *Hyrcanus* and his Faction, who were not able to reſiſt him, called in the Aſſiſtance of the *Romans*. *Pompey*, at their Requeſt, beſieges *Jeruſalem*; and had the Gates ſurrender'd to him by *Hyrcanus*'s Party. But *Ariſtobulus* and his Adherents fought it out, till at laſt they were vanquiſhed and over-power'd. The *Romans* hereupon put *Hyrcanus* in Poſſeſſion of the Government; yet ſo, as to hold it by their Favour and Permiſſion. This Proceeding created great and laſting Diſſenſions among the *Jews*. Some ſubmitting to the *Roman* Power, as thinking they had a fair Title, both by Conqueſt and Surrender: Others objecting, that the Surrender was made by a Party only, and not the whole Body of the People; *that* it was not Conqueſt, but Treachery, which brought *Jeruſalem* to their Mercy; and conſequently, that they were Uſurpers; and *Hyrcanus* and his Followers, Betrayers of their Country. Now, according to what was ſaid before, the *Herodians* appear

to

to have been for the *Roman* Power, and the *Phariſees* againſt it. And, ſince the paying of Tribute was, according to Their Senſe, an Acknowledgent of the Power; this difficulty preſſes any poſitive Anſwer to the Queſtion. Since, in determining for the Payment, Chriſt muſt give Offence to the Phariſees, and in effect renounce thoſe Liberties and Privileges, which ſome Jewiſh Doctors inſiſted upon; And, in pronouncing againſt it, he was ſure to incur the *Herodians* Diſpleaſure, and render himſelf obnoxious to the Juriſdiction of the Civil Sword.

3. That which added yet more to their Doubt in this Matter, was what *Joſephus* and *Euſebius* relate, concerning *Judas* the *Gaulonite*. He, about the time of the Taxation, in which, St. *Luke* ſays, our Saviour was born, diſquieted the Minds of many, and repreſented that Decree of *Auguſtus*, as a Mark of Infamy and Servitude, which ought not to be borne. This Man is ſaid to have inſtituted a particular Sect; One of whoſe Tenets was, that no Jew ought to pay Tribute; or to acknowledge any Sovereign Lord, but God only: That they were His peculiar People, and therefore bound to maintain their Liberty; eſpecially againſt profane and uncircumciſed Pretenders, ſuch as the *Roman* Emperors were. So that the paying of Tribute to *Cæſar* was not at this time the Queſtion of mere Curioſity, but a Matter of Moment, with regard to Practice; ſuch as had been warmly diſputed, and engaged many on both ſides. Nor was it a point of mere Bravery, in the Eſteem of the Phariſees, and others of that Party; but a Scruple of Conſcience, and a Debate of Religion, whether this Tribute ſhould be paid or no. No, nor yet was this Controverſy, about ſubmitting to foreign Governors, a point firſt ſtarted by *Judas*; but ſeems to have been much more ancient; and ſome Footſteps of it to be found among, not the *Maccabees* only, but even thoſe Jews, who ſo obſtinately

nately refuſed to ſubmit to the *Chaldeans*, when they beſieged *Jeruſalem*.

For further clearing of this Matter, I obſerve, that the Tribute-Money here does by no means appear to be the ſame with that, which our Saviour paid for himſelf and *Peter* at *Capernaum*. That was the half Shekel, which every Man above twenty Years old paid to the Uſe of the Temple; and which, though firſt ordained by God at building the Tabernacle, (*Exod.* xxx. 13.) yet did not ceaſe with it, but continued to be yearly collected till the time of *Veſpaſian*: And He, *Joſephus* ſays, transferr'd it, from the Service of the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, to that of the Capitol of *Rome*. Now the Conſequence of this is, that the Phariſees might have ſome Pretence to quarrel with *Cenſus* or Tribute-Money here; though they without any Difficulty paid that, mentioned in the *ſeventeenth* of this Goſpel. Our Saviour's ſubmitting to That would not therefore prejudice him in favour of This: Becauſe That was not a Tribute to *Cæſar*, nor of His Impoſing; but a Sum levied for Religious Uſes, and of a Date as ancient as *Moſes*. That belonged to them as *Jews*, and the People of God; This Burden ſpoke them a Conquered Nation, and under the Yoke of the *Romans*. This therefore was look'd upon as a Reflection upon that Honour and Liberty of their Country, which they thought it even Religious to aſſert, and, as much as in them lay, to preſerve from Violence.

The true State of the Queſtion being thus explained; Let us now proceed to conſider, with what Addreſs and Dexterity our Bleſſed Saviour returned his Anſwer. Which, the *two and twentieth* Verſe tells us, was ſo managed, that his Enemies, to their great Aſtoniſhment, found their malicious Deſigns utterly diſappointed; and deſpaired of expoſing him to the juſt Cenſure of Either of the oppoſite Parties. To this purpoſe

purpoſe he firſt gives them to underſtand, that their Treachery and Falſhood were not hid from his diſcerning Eye; that the formal Commendation they gave of his Sincerity and Courage in declaring the Truth, he ſaw through; and was well aware, that they ſought not their Own Satisfaction, but His Miſchief. *Jeſus, perceiving their Wickedneſs, ſaid, Why tempt ye me, ye Hypocrites?* Ver. 18, 19. *Shew me the Tribute-Money. And they brought unto him a Penny.* A Penny! that is, a *Roman Coin*, current at that time among them in Trade; and ſuch as the *Cenſus* or Poll-Tax, now under Deliberation, was wont to be paid in. Still he determines nothing; but, in marvellous Prudence, draws them on by Conceſſions out of their own Mouths. *He ſaith unto them, Whoſe is this Image and Superſcription;* Ver. 20, 21. *They ſay unto him Cæſar's. Then ſaith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæſar, the things which are Cæſar's, and unto God the things that are God's.* That is, This Signature and Stamp does, by your own Acknowledgement, ſpeak the Money to be *Cæſar's*: So that, in demanding a part of it back again, he aſks for his Own. This is not therefore *to give*, ſo properly as *to reſtore*; and whatſoever any Perſon hath a Title to, you are obliged to render him. You will do well therefore rightly to conſider the Obligations you lie under, and to diſcharge them faithfully, in their ſeveral kinds: that both your Earthly and your Heavenly King may have what belongs to Each; and Neither of them may be defrauded, upon pretence of not being juſt to the Other.

Which way this Anſwer inclined was ſufficiently plain, to any that would impartially conſider it. But the Terms are ſo cautious and general, that his Accuſers took a liberty of interpreting them ſo, as from hence to form a Charge againſt him before *Pilate*. For it is moſt likely they referr'd to this very Paſſage,

in

in those Words, *Luke* xxiii. 2. *We have found this Fellow perverting the Nation, and forbidding to give Tribute to Cæsar.* And this Sense they then fasten'd upon the Place; notwithstanding the natural and common Acceptation of it be directly contrary. And indeed the Force of it seems to lie principally in these *Three* Particulars.

First, That, as God had His Rights, so had *Cæsar* likewise His.

Secondly, How *Cæsar*'s Right evidenced it self, and whence it was to be gathered.

Thirdly, That these Rights are distinct. They do not, in their own nature interfere; aud therefore Men must take care not to confound them, but discharge their Debt and Duty to Both. In all which I would fain hope it needless to add, that what this Passage intends of *Cæsar* in particular, must in proportion be understood of all Kings and Civil Governors in general.

1. *First*, We are plainly taught from hence, that as God had His Right, so had *Cæsar* also His. That God hath a Right over us and all Ours, is a Truth so manifest, that every one, who considers Him as a Creator, and himself as a Creature, cannot any longer dispute it. For Natural Reason will draw this Inference, That He, who is the Maker, must of necessity be the Lord and Proprietor, of all things. Nor was there any occasion for proving This to the Pharisees; since the very taking of God's Right for granted, and understanding That in too strict a Sense, was the very Foundation of their refusing Tribute to *Cæsar*. They imagined His Property in them so incommunicable, that no Person upon Earth, who was not in the true Religion, could have a just pretence to challenge any part of what was Theirs. For we are to observe, that the Marks of Submission refused to *Cæsar*, the Jews were not so weak, or so capricious, as to deny to a King of their

their own Country and their own Perſuaſion. They allowed Such to rule from and under God; But ſince He had ſingled this People out from the whole World, and diſtinguiſhed them by the Knowledge of Himſelf and the Truth; they could not ſuffer themſelves to think, that a Stranger to the true Faith could ever have this Truſt committed to him by God. When their Fortune therefore reduced them to live under any Such; they thought Their Power Uſurpation, and themſelves at liberty to diſpenſe with the Acknowledgments of their Obedience to them. Thus what was moſt willingly paid to a *David*, or a *Joſiah*, or a *Judas* the *Maccabee*, or to their own High-Prieſts, when the Adminiſtration of the Civil Government was lodged in Them; the ſame was diſputed, and by Many thought unlawful to be paid to *Cæſar*. Notwithſtanding all which, our Saviour, having from their own Confeſſion extorted thus much, That the Money they then uſed bore the Image of *Cæſar*, grounds his Rule here upon That; and argues in effect thus. If the Coin you uſe be confeſſedly *Cæſar*'s; then ſomewhat you acknowledge is His. Now whatever is ſo, muſt be rendered to him; whether in point of Tribute, or in any other Inſtance of the Pre-eminences and Rights, due to Sovereignty.

That Government itſelf is the Inſtitution and Ordinance of God, St. *Paul* hath aſſured us moſt expreſsly in the *thirteenth* to the *Romans*: where he makes this an Argument for every *Soul's being ſubject to the higher Powers*; *becauſe there is no Power but of God, and the Powers that be are ordained of God*. And Reaſon indeed will tell us, that this Argument alone can bear the weight, laid upon it there by the Apoſtle. For No other can oblige all Souls to Subjection, but He only, whoſe all Souls are. And whatever Convenience Men might find in ſubmitting; yet, unleſs Rulers were *God's Miniſters*, there could never be any laſt-

ing and neceſſary Tye of Obedience. Upon any other foot, People might be ſubject for Intereſt; but their being *appointed of God* is the only Conſideration, that can engage us to be ſubject for *Conſcience ſake*. Becauſe God only can bind, and is Lord of the Conſcience: For Conſcience can of right ſubmit to no Commands but His; as they are iſſued, either immediately from himſelf, or elſe from thoſe that act and hold under him.

So much therefore as God hath given to Governors, ſo much, and no more, is their due. And we cannot ſuppoſe, that ſo wiſe a Being would inſtitute a Thing of ſuch Conſequence to the World, as Government is, without appropriating to it all thoſe Perquiſites, which are needful to its Maintenance and Support. Whatever then appears of neceſſity to this purpoſe, all That we may fairly conclude belongs to Them, who are inveſted with it. For Example. Men, it is evident, muſt be reſtrained from Rapine, and Violence, and Fraud, and whatſoever elſe their own partial and extravagant Deſires would be apt to put them upon, to the prejudice of Peace, Society, and Order. But a bare Senſe of Duty is not ſufficient to render any Laws of Juſtice and Equity effectual. Conſequently, ſome Enforcement muſt unavoidably be given to theſe Laws; ſuch as may prove a Terror to Offenders by Mulcts and Puniſhments and Bodily Pains; and make Men honeſt in their own Defence. Now the Power of executing and inflicting theſe is what we commonly call the Civil Sword. A Power ſo eſſential to the Good of Mankind, that no Regular Society hath ever been without it. And accordingly the Apoſtle reckons this, as one of the particular Appointments of God; *He is the Miniſter of God to thee for good; But, if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Miniſter of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil*, Ver. 4.

The

The publick Neceſſities of the People are, or ought to be, their Governor's chief Care: And a Care they are ſo great, as to devour his Time and his Reſt. The defending them from Inſults and Invaſions from abroad; The keeping them compoſed and eaſy, and diſpenſing Juſtice at home; Theſe are matters of vaſt conſequence, and trouble, and expence. Now in regard the Benefit of theſe is publick, it is very reaſonable the Publick ſhould ſuſtain and provide for the Charge of their own Security. And this comes home to the Caſe before us. The ſame St. *Paul* urges the Commiſſion of God, and the Equity of bearing this part of the Burden too. For, ſince We are the Object of their conſtant Care, we ought to ſupply, nay to reward that Care. *Ver.* 6. *For this cauſe pay ye tribute alſo, for they are God's Miniſters, attending continually upon this very thing.* The ſame is to be ſaid of Fear, and Reverence, and due Reſpect: All which conduce, and indeed are needful, to the Defence and Security of our Governors. And they are therefore ſummed up together briefly in the *ſeventh* Verſe, *Render therefore to all their dues. Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.*

Once more: Becauſe it is not poſſible for the greateſt Human Prudence to make Laws ſo perfect, as ſhall provide againſt every Inconveniency, and ſuit the Circumſtances of every particular Perſon within its Juriſdiction: And ſince thoſe Laws, when wiſely made, yet cannot be always ſo nicely adminiſtered, but that ſome Perſonal Hardſhips will follow upon the Execution of them: It is alſo neceſſary to tye up the Hands of froward and angry Men from Revenge, and ſeditious Inſurrections, upon ſuch Provocations. Hence therefore they are called upon to conſider, Whoſe Yoke it is they wear; and how guilty thoſe falſe Pretenders to Liberty are, who petulantly kick, or caſt it

off, every time it pinches them. For no Throne can be ſtable, no Prince ſecure, no Society durable, upon thoſe Terms. The contrary Methods of Meekneſs, and Patience, and quiet Submiſſion, and enduring private Wrongs and Oppreſſions, rather than to deſtroy the publick Peace and Order ſettled by God, are therefore ſtrictly preſſed at the *ſecond* Verſe of that Chapter, under the ſevereſt Penalties. *Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the Power, reſiſteth the Ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation.*

In the mean while, when the Gift and Appointment of God are ſo often mentioned; This is not to be interpreted of any Miraculous or Perſonal Deſignation from above. For though there be ſome Inſtances of this kind among the *Jews*; yet They were an Exception to all Mankind beſides. That the Original Cauſes of Politic Societies were, The Confuſions, which aroſe from multiplied Families, and numerous Branches; The Corruption of Nature, which incited Men to injure and defraud and ſpoil one another; And the conſent of ſubmitting to one common Head, who ſhould govern and judge between them: Though it hath never yet been fully proved; might however be granted, without allowing thoſe wild Conſequences, for the ſake whereof ſo many popular Modellers of Government are fond of laying its Foundation there. For, even this Way, it is moſt probable, that Kingly Government was the firſt of all others; as neareſt reſembling that Domeſtic and Paternal One, which, from the Increaſe and Irregularity of Men, was become uſeleſs and inſufficient. The Difference of Places, and Tempers, and other Circumſtances in the People, The Abuſe of Power to Tyranny and inſufferable Oppreſſion; The Decay and Failure of Families, and other ſuch Conſiderations, wherein the Prince is concerned; ſeem to have been the Cauſes, why, in proceſs of time, neither

neither all parts of the World had the ſame Form of Government, nor the ſame Countries always continued in the ſame. But ſtill, In all theſe Caſes, where Men are ſuppoſed to have parted with their Original Liberty at firſt; where they came upon Terms for their better Safety, and more equal Diſtribution of Juſtice afterwards; where they have deviſed more convenient Conſtitutions; Thoſe ſeveral Conſtitutions are God's Ordinances. Their wholeſome Laws have His Sanction; He beſtows that Power over their Lives and Perſons, which themſelves never had: He decrees, how, and by whom his own World ſhall be ruled: But he uſes Men as his Inſtruments, in executing this Decree. Whether Men therefore are ruled by One, or by Many, ſtill it is God that rules them. Whether They who rule, attain the Government by lineal Deſcent, or by popular Election, or by Conqueſt, or by Surrender, or by Compact and Treaty, ſtill it is God that gives it; And the ſeveral Conſtitutions of ſeveral Countries, the Victories, and Succeſſes, and Events, which His Providence affords, are but ſo many ſeveral ways of giving it. Thus we are poſitively told in Scripture, that *He ſetteth up one and pulleth down another*; That *He ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will*; That *he changeth the Times and the Seaſons, he removeth Kings and ſetteth up Kings*; That *for the Tranſgreſſion of a Land the Princes thereof are many, and Strangers are made to have Dominion over them*; and the like. So it was frequently with the *Jews*; ſo it was particularly at this very Time, in the Caſe of *Cæſar*; whoſe Right to receive Tribute was the Queſtion now depending. And it is of ſome Importance to obſerve, what my

Pſal. lxxv. 7.
Dan. iv. 25.
Dan. ii. 21.
Prov. xxviii. 2.
Ezek. xi. 9.
—xxviii. 7.

2. *Second* Particular propoſes; which is, How *Cæſar*'s Right to ſome things among the *Jews* evidences itſelf to us; and whence we may gather it, according to our Saviour's Reaſoning.

Now, for the aſſerting of This, He goes not about to unravel all the Niceties of *Cæſar*'s Title, either to the Empire of *Rome*, or to that over *Judæa*. He diſputes not the Invitation of *Hyrcanus*, the Sedition made by his Faction, or the Conqueſt of *Ariſtobulus* and his Followers, who kept the City as long as they could, and fought it out againſt *Pompey*'s Army. And yet he knew, all theſe might be objected, by diſſenting Perſons of the *Phariſees* Party. But all the Foundation he thought neceſſary to proceed upon, is This of *Cæſar*'s Image and Superſcription upon the current Coin of the Country. And the main Streſs and Strength of that Argument, ſo far as I apprehend it, lies in This.

Mankind, when they cemented into Societies, ſoon found the Neceſſity of Traffick with one Another; that ſo Each might be furniſhed with what he had not within himſelf. This was at firſt carried on by way of Truck and Bartering of Goods; But, becauſe it was not eaſy to fix a valuable Conſideration upon Commodities, which would be ſure to riſe and fall in Exchange, according as the Perſon dealt with, had more or leſs Occaſion for them; Upon this, and ſome other Accounts, they found it convenient to pitch upon a common Standard, which ſhould anſwer all things, and that is, what we call Money. Now, ſince even This was liable to Deceit, by mixing, adulterating, and counterfeiting, or by otherwiſe diminiſhing the Metal; It was farther contrived, that ſome certain Marks ſhould be impreſſed upon it, whereby every Man might know, that he was not impoſed upon, in the Worth, and the Quantity, of what he received. And becauſe this Teſtimony was of great and publick Conſequence,

Conſequence, nothing leſs than the publick Faith was thought a ſufficient Aſſurance. Hence, generally ſpeaking, the Supreme Governor hath always been entruſted with the Valuation and Coinage of Money. Hence the preſent Ruler's Impreſt hath been fixed upon it; and does, as it were, ſpeak it to be worth what it pretends to. Hence, without ſome notorious Defect, the Subjects, within their reſpective Dominions, are not only content, but bound, to accept it as ſuch, in Payments. Hence, *Laſtly*, the embaſeing, diminiſhing, or counterfeiting of ſuch Money hath been very juſtly puniſhed, by moſt Laws with great Severities, and by Ours with Death: It being conſtrued Treaſon, thus to abuſe the Stamp, and uſurp a Prerogative peculiar to the Chief Magiſtrate. * Since then the Caſe of Coin was thus in *Judæa*; Since the *Jews* accepted and trafficked with *Cæſar*'s Money, and held it current in all Payments with them; nay ſince, upon ſome Occaſions, they were obliged to uſe this, and the *Jewiſh* Shekels would not paſs (as in that of their Tribute particularly;) This was a Conſtructive Acknowledgment of *Cæſar*'s being in Poſſeſſion of them, and that He was their Supreme Lord at that Time. Beſides, He indulged them the Exerciſe of their Religion, and the Enjoyment of their Civil Rights; He fought their Battles, and protected them againſt the common Enemy, the *Arabians*, and *Parthians*, and the like. And therefore, as well in Conſideration of the Benefits they received from him, as becauſe he was, (by the Providence of God, which in a peculiar manner diſpoſes of Kingdoms,) their Sovereign at that Time; ſomething was here declared to be his due: that is, The Tribute, and ſuch other Acknowledgments, as belong to the State and Dignity

* *Quemadmodum Cæſaris nummum eſſe Imago Cæſaris docebat, ita poteſtatem ejus, & quid illi deberetur, nummus cum imagine præfractos, neq; minus tamen ſervientes, vel docebat, vel docere debuerat.* Heinſii Exercitat. in ver. 19.

of that Poſt. Thus our Saviour then adviſed the *Jews*; Thus, we are told, the Primitive Chriſtians behaved themſelves; and, if I am miſtaken, either in Matter of Fact, or in the Reaſon of the thing, I will ſhew, that I err at leaſt after the Authority of Judicious and Excellent Perſons. To which End my Reader hath two Obſervations upon this Paſſage in the Margin; and with Them, the Cloſe of my Second Particular.

* Grot. in V. 16. *Atque hanc legem videmus ſibi præſtitiſſe Chriſtianos veteres, ut cui vis imperium nacto, fidem atq; obedientiam præſtarent, neq; ulli ſub ſpecioſis nominibus rei novandi accederent.*

* *This Law we plainly ſee the ancient Chriſtians did ſet to themſelves, to pay Faith and Allegiance to any Perſon whatſoever in Poſſeſſion of the Government; and not take to any Party, or Perſon, who, under ſpecious Pretences, were for making Alterations.* And upon the 20th Verſe; † *The very Money, which had its Valuation from* Cæſar's *Edict, and carried his Face and Name upon it, was an Evidence, that* Cæſar *was at that time actually poſſeſt of the Supreme Power over* Judæa; *and that the* Jews, *who uſed that Money, acknowledged ſo much. It might indeed be objected, that the* Romans *ruled over the* Jews, *and* Cæſar *over the* Romans, *in Fact, but that they had no Right to do ſo. But Chriſt ſhews that this Objection ſignifies nothing to the Matter in hand. For, ſince Peace cannot be ſecured without Forces, nor Forces had without Pay, nor Pay without Taxes or Tribute; it follows, that Tribute ought to be paid to the Perſon actually governing, ſo long as he continues to govern; In Conſideration of the common Safety and Protection. which are ſecured by the preſent Poſſeſſor of the Government, whoever that Poſſeſſor be.*

† *Ipſe igitur nummus, pretium habens ex edicto Cæſaris, Cæſarisq; nomen & vultum præferens, teſtabatur Cæſarem ſummum in Judæam Imperium re ipſa obtinere, idq; a Judæis nummo illo utentibus agnoſci. Objici poterat, ipſo quidem facto Romanos Judæis, & Cæſarem Romanis imperaſſe, at nullo jure. Sed Chriſtus oſtendit, hoc ad propoſitam quæſtionem nihil pertinere. Nam, cum nec quies gentium ſine armis, nec arma ſine ſtipendiis, nec ſtipendia ſine tributis haberi poſſint; ſequitur, ei, qui imperat, tantiſper dum imperat, pendenda tributa; ut pretium communis tutelæ, quam præſtat nobis, quiſquis eſt publici Imperii poſſeſſor.*

I am ſenſible, what hath been objected to fixing ſuch a Meaning on our bleſſed Lord; and how injurious a Doctrine it is repreſented to Rightful Princes, in Diſtreſs from Rebellious and uſurping Powers. But, waving other Arguments for the Reaſonableneſs of thus underſtanding and inferring from this Paſſage; it ſhall ſuffice to ſay at preſent: *That*, ſuppoſing Subjects to act conſcientiouſly, and upon the Principles here laid down, no rightful Governor can ever be diſpoſſeſſed. And ſure, it were a moſt unequal Reaſoning, to charge upon the interpretation of any Scripture thoſe Hardſhips, which can never happen, till Men have acted in direct Oppoſition to the Text ſo interpreted.

III. I ſhall detain my Reader very little upon the *Third* Obſervation, *that* theſe Rights of God and *Cæſar* are diſtinct. There is a Debt of Duty to Both, and the Diſcharge of Each is enjoined by our Lord; when to *Render therefore unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's*, he adds, *And unto God the things that are God's*. The ſame Reaſon indeed enforces Both, for We have God's Image and Superſcription too. He hath ſtamped his own Character and Likeneſs upon our Souls; and reſerved to himſelf the Property of Theſe. Whatever Claim our Governors may have to the Temporal and Outward Poſſeſſions, the Liberties, the Eſtates, the Bodies, of their Subjects; they derive it from above. But the Original Lord of all we have, or are, hath not communicated a Power over our Minds; Nor could They, in the Nature of the Thing, lie under any Juriſdiction, but his own. Hence 'tis our Bleſſed Lord's Advice, not *to fear Men, who, after they have killed the Body, have no more that they can do*; but *to* ſerve and *fear him*, who, *after he hath killed*, can *deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell*. And he eſteems himſelf well ſerved, with regard to the Matter now before us; when we pay all Fidelity and Obedience in Temporal Cauſes,

to

to the Perſons by Him ſet over us: provided Care be taken that He ſtill reign Supreme; and, that thoſe things, wherein Religion and our Conſciences are properly concerned, be kept inviolate.

That *We muſt obey God rather than Man*, is an expreſs Limitation, both of the Chief Magiſtrate's Power, and of the Subject's Compliance, left us by an Authority not to be diſputed. Farther than this the Scripture hath not gone, ſo far as I can perceive. And the Miniſters of Chriſt, who publiſh other Schemes of Liberty, ſeem to exceed the Bounds of their Rule, and to be out of the Buſineſs of their Function. For the Goſpel no where projects new Conſtitutions; but conſults the publick Peace of thoſe already in being, by enjoining Order and Unity, Meekneſs and Submiſſion. It forbids Rulers to invade, and it equally forbids Subjects to encroach. It allows all Liberty, that is Chriſtian and Lawful; but it wiſely forbears to determine the utmoſt Point of that Liberty: The Spirit by whom it was dictated, well knowing the Corruption and Pride of Mens Hearts, and how prone they always are to turn Liberty into Licentiouſneſs. It therefore contents itſelf with commanding in general Terms an active Obedience, where that can be paid without Sin; and, where that cannot be paid, it commands ſuch Submiſſions, as are due to Powers, inſtituted and *ordained*, not by the People, but *by God* himſelf. It calls indeed the Governors an *Ordinance of Man*; with regard to the Benefits of Human Society promoted by them, and to the next immediate Inſtruments of their Eſtabliſhment, and to thoſe Civil Conſtitutions and Laws, Whence the Meaſures of their Adminiſtration are taken. But it no where ſays, or warrants Us to ſay, that Men are the Source and Original Cauſe of thoſe Powers; Or that, in caſe of Male-Adminiſtration, Subjects have

Acts v. 29.

Rom. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

have right to revenge or reform Abuſes, by ſuch outrageous Wickedneſs and impious Rebellion, as the Solemnities of this Day commemorate our moſt happy Deliverance from.

May the Sincerity of theſe Praiſes for a Mercy ſo valuable to Us and our Poſterity, be manifeſted in Loyal Principles and godly Lives. And may We of the preſent Generation in particular, inſtead of indulging nice and dangerous, but now ſure moſt unneceſſary Speculations, how far we may diſobey or oppoſe our Governors; act like Men truly ſenſible, that, beſides the Ties of Conſcience, it is Our Felicity to be moſt ſtrongly bound by thoſe of Gratitude. So ſhall our Excellent QUEEN receive that Chearful Obedience, which is a Debt to her moſt pious, and gentle Adminiſtration; A fit Tribute of Thanks for that, among other glorious Effects, in which this Day of Joy hath been fruitful; And an Inſurance of future Bleſſings, which our God, even the God of Order and Peace, ſhall give to a People willing and dutiful, to Him in the firſt place, and then to the Prince, whom he ſets over them, for His ſake.

The

The Eighth Day of March,

Being the Day, on which her Majesty Queen ANNE *began her Happy Reign.*

The EPISTLE.

1 *St.* Pet. ii. 11—17.

The GOSPEL.

St. Matth. xxii. 16—22.

THE Scriptures for this Occasion being likewise appointed on the *Twenty Ninth* of *May*; Nothing remains, but to refer my Reader thither; and earnestly to beg the Concurrence of his Prayers, that God would long continue this joyful Solemnity to us.

A

Threefold Table.

The FIRST of Scriptures Commented upon.

The SECOND of Texts occaſionally Illuſtrated.

The THIRD of ſome Principal Matters contained in the Comments themſelves.

The Reader will pleaſe to take notice, that in the Firſt and Second Table, the Chapters referr'd to are mark'd by ſmall Numeral Letters, and the Verſes by Figures; but in the Third, Numerals denote the Volume, and Figures the Page.

Alſo, that when any Figures are joined by —; The ſame Subject continues to be treated of, from the former to the latter Page ſo connected: As iii. 453—9, is Third Vol. from Page 453 to 459.

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